NMP

COMICS FEATURE™

$1.95
$2.25 Canada
95p U.K.

AUGUST NUMBER 11

Jack KIRBY returns to Comics

Gene COLAN on BATMAN, WONDER WOMAN

ROY THOMAS: "Looking Ahead at DC"

THE JUSTICE SOCIETY

The New KA-ZAR

NMPS

THE QUESTIONS FOR THE FIRST ISSUE OF...

ARTFORM

COMMENTARY ON SEQUENTIAL ART

WHAT

does the New X-Men's foe, ARCADE, have in common with Hannah Arendt's EICHMANN IN JERUSALEM?

"THE BANALITY OF EVIL IN COMIC BOOKS," by Margaret O'Connell

HOW

would a serious scholar attempt to prevent his study of the LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES from being "mere opinion?"

"OBJECTIVITY IN CRITICISM," by Richard Howell

PLUS:

Book Reviews
Statement of Purpose
Our critics respond to Peter Sanderson's essay "Can Comics Be Art?"

Yes, please send me **ARTFORM**. I want a new approach to comics criticism.

NAME _____

STREET _____

City/State/Zip _____

ARTFORM MAGAZINE 12345 Starkey Road Largo Florida 33543

ARTFORM's first quarterly issue is due out in March. Subscribe now and ensure your catching it. Only $12.00 for the first four issues.

NMP

COMICS FEATURE

AUGUST No. 11

$1.95

SUPER-TEAM SPIRIT

Murray Ward's continuing super-team series examines the progenitor of all super-teams, ***The Justice Society of America.*** pg. 60

©1981 DC Comics

THE TWO SIDES OF *KA-ZAR*

Chuck Huber and ***Carol Kalish*** each appraise the new ***KA-ZAR THE SAVAGE*** comic in wildly different ways. pg. 45

©1981 Marvel Comics

©1981 DC Comics

AN INTERVIEW WITH *ROY THOMAS*

The foremost writer/editor of the 1970s explains his plans at DC Comics, including ***ALL-STAR SQUADRON*** and ***ARAK.*** pg. 27

ANIMATED CHATTER

Why nobody wants to be an ***ARISTOCAT***, or at least why reviewer ***Robert Rhodes*** thinks so. pg. 24

©1981 Chicago Tribune-New York News Syndicate

END NOTES

Peter Sanderson critiques the work of recent Museum of Cartoon Art exhibition subjects ***Harold Gray*** and ***Peter Arno.*** pg. 80

THE FANDOM ZONE

"Fandom Origins" continues the march of progress with "***The Calm Before The Storm.***" ***Don & Maggie Thompson.*** pg. 55

Carl Docks' brand-new "Qualified Praise" reviews fanzines and related publications. pg. 57

Plus listings of current comics events. pg. 54

HEADLINES

Kirby's ***CAPTAIN VICTORY***, New Media's "semi-pro" line, Gene Colan at DC, Marvel's schedule problems, and DC's price rise. More, too. pg. 13

GUILTY FANTASIES

Whoever knows industry buzz-words shrinks at the touch of...Criticism-Thing? ***Peter Gillis***, as usual, tells all. pg. 78

©1981 Marvel Comics Group

THE LOST COMICS COMPANIES

Chuck Wooley examines ***SUPERMAN-TIM*** comics, rare and generally-forgotten exponents of the tie-in market. pg. 74

Front Cover by Bill Black.
Back Cover by Richard Howell

MORNING NOTICES

What some of you had to say about what we had to say. pg. 9

©1981 DC Comics

OPENING NOTES

Editor ***Richard Howell*** explains why the staff roll call of ***COMICS FEATURE*** resembles a game of musical chairs. pg. 6

STAFF

HAL SCHUSTER
publisher

RICHARD HOWELL
CAROL KALISH
editors

BOB SORON
PAUL DINI
assistant editors

PETER SANDERSON
New York Correspondent

JACK SCHUSTER
President

RICHARD HOWELL
production manager

CAROL KALISH
circulation manager

BILL KRUTCHICK
financial officer

KATHIE MARET
BENNET POMERANTZ
traffic department

BIZARRO TYPESETTER #1
mascot

CONTRIBUTORS

Steve Adams
Bill Black
Paul Dini
Carl Docks
Peter Gillis
Richard Howell
Chuck Huber
Carol Kalish
Tom Linehan
W. Reinhold
Robert Rhodes
Peter Sanderson
Don Thompson
Maggie Thompson
Albert Vai
Murray Ward
Chuck Wooley

COMICS FEATURE (USPS 0199-7459) is published monthly by New Media Publishing, Inc., 12345 Starkey, Largo, FL 33543. Controlled circulation paid at Boston, MA. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to COMICS FEATURE, 127 Mt. Auburn St., Cambridge, MA 02138. ©1981 New Media Publishing, Inc. All submissions should be sent to editorial offices located at 127 Mt. Auburn St., Cambridge, MA 02138.

Cover characters ©1981 DC Comics.
Back cover characters ©1981 Marvel Comics Group.

THESE GOT US WHERE WE ARE TODAY!
ORDER YOUR COMICS FEATURE BACK ISSUES NOW!

Issue #1 is already a valued collector's item. It features a long interview with Archie Goodwin and overviews on the art of Gene Colan and ***THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES.*** Order your copy today for only $6.00.

Issue #2 takes up where our first issue left off. Plus you get an exhaustive interview with Mike Grell and another with the creative team of ***IRON MAN,*** David Michelinie and Bob Layton. The Silver Age of Comics, our much-talked-about series on the comics phenomenon of the 1960s begins! We only have a few copies left of this popular issue so complete you collection now. $4.00

#3 has a rare interview with Boris Vallejo as well as a beautiful full-color Vallejo cover. Plus articles on ***MODESTY BLAISE, THE MICRONAUTS,*** and the Silver Age of Comics. Only $4.00.

#4 features a John Byrne cover, unpublished pages from the original version of ***X-MEN #137,*** and the inside story on why Jean Grey had to die! As if that weren't enough, #4 also contains an interview with Denny O'Neil, a special preview of Art Spiegelman's ***RAW*** magazine, and The Silver Age of Comics, Part III, Available now for $4.00.

STEVE ENGLEHART INTERVIEWED!
MARVEL STARTS FROM SCRATCH!
DEVELOPING ART SKILLS FOR FUN AND PROFIT!
CONVENTION REPORTS!
THE FANDOM ZONE AND MORE!

Issue #5 features an interview with Steve Englehart, the Fandom Zone, The Silver Age of Comics, Part IV, Collecting Original Art for Fun and Profit, and lots more. $3.00.

COMICS FEATURE #6 spotlights Len Wein. Plus The Silver Age of Comics, Part **v**, the beginning of a series on the Women in ***TERRY AND THE PIRATES,*** and a look at the European comics scene. $2.00.

Issue #7 was a real winner. Dissecting ***THE DAZZLER*** and ***DETECTIVE #500.*** Plus an interview with Zippy's Bill Griffith, and How Superman Treats His Women. $2.00

Order all these great issues from:

NEW MEDIA PUBLISHING, INC.
12345 Starkey Road
Largo, FL 33515

DON'T BE LEFT OUT IN THE COLD...

©1981 Lucasfilms Ltd.

subscribe to COMICS FEATURE today!

COMICS FEATURE will be raising its subscription rates soon, but if you order ***now*** you'll still be able to subscribe under our special offer rates. 12 big issues for only $12.00. Don't miss out on our upcoming features:

INTERVIEWS WITH ***ROY THOMAS, STEVE GERBER*** and ***THE UPSTART STUDIO***
SUPER-GROUPS THROUGH TIME and ***THE LOST COMICS COMPANIES***
THE FANDOM ZONE, HEADLINES and ***MORE!***

Send this coupon (or a facsimile) and your payment to:

New Media Publishing, Inc.
12345 Starkey Road
Largo FL 33543

Yes! I appreciate *Comics Feature's* positive attitude! Please send me 12 issues for only $15.00

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

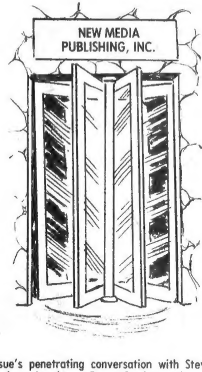
OPENING NOTES

by Richard Howell

With this issue of ***COMICS FEATURE***—our sixth—Carol and I become this magazine's longest surviving editors. (No, founding and former editor Dean Mullaney is doing quite well, thank you. He's just doing it elsewhere.) We naturally enough feel that this is an appropriate time to extend our thanks to all our readers who have supported ***FEATURE*** through not one, but ***two*** sets of editors making the same "learning errors" over the course of the same year. The rough spots are largely smoothed over by now, folks, and we thank you for both your support and your patience.

And speaking of "former editors," we still occasionally receive packages, news releases, or whatever, addressed to "Peter Gillis—Editor, ***COMICS FEATURE***." I'm assuming that that mistake is due to the overall confusion which accompanied Dean's departure before a successor was actually chosen—however, it's still wrong. Peter Gillis was ***associate*** editor of this magazine for several issues, but since both the distance between us (we're in Cambridge, he's in New York), and the press of Peter's other responsibilities (Editor of New Media Publications' ***ADVENTURE ILLUSTRATED*** and ***FANTASY ILLUSTRATED***) rendered it an all-but-meaningless "honorary" title, it was dropped (by mutual agreement). For you Gillis fans, however, don't stop reading ***FEATURE***, because Peter is represented every issue he wants to be by his own inimitable ***"Guilty Fantasies"*** column, and very soon (like maybe next issue, but don't quote that) a preview section of the Gillis-guided NMP Graphic Magazines. Keep watching for an announcement. With any luck, you'll read it here first!

And, speaking of changes in ***FEATURE***'s lineup, I should also mention that Peter Sanderson's change of title from Associate Editor to New York Correspondent is likewise not a demotion in any sense of the word. Peter, also a New Yorker (by disposition, we keep telling him, but will he move?), is likewise out of our immediate consulting range—however much we would like to have his suggestions and advice on a regular basis. So again, by mutual consent, Peter's official masthead title was altered to reflect his real duties—foremost among which is gathering news in NYC. (And if you don't think ***that's*** important, imagine what a one-page news section in ***FEATURE*** would look like.) Peter Sanderson will, of course, continue to be represented in these pages (as a writer) by his erudite ***"End Notes"*** column, as well as by various special features and (especially) interviews, such as next



issue's penetrating conversation with Steve Gerber. In short, Peter Sanderson is yet another case of not forgotten and not gone, either.

And, while I'm discussing our staff, I'd also like to bid a farewell from ***FEATURE*** to Paul Dini, our former real-life Associate Editor and Production Assistant who at this writing is working on a new, commissioned ***"Tarzan"*** script for Filmation. Paul will continue to contribute occasional pieces to our magazines, although his own freelance career as an animation writer will consume most of his writing time.

Paul's replacement is Bob Soron, a graduate of Emerson College and long-time comics devotee. Bob had been doing freelance proofreading for ***FEATURE*** since the time when Carol and I decided that after having ***typeset FEATURE***, we were both too close to the product (not to mention bleary-eyed) to proofread with any degree of completeness. (For evidence, see issue #6—no, never mind. If you've never seen issue #6, don't seek it out on any say-so from me.) Besides being an able proofreader and possessing considerable production skills, Bob also shares Carol's and my musical tastes and general comics biases, so there'll be no more holding up production while we argue whether the radio should be tuned to the country or the new wave station—as happened with Paul. (No, that's not the reason he left, scandal-mongers.)

WHY EDITORS GET GRAY
NUMBER 42
COLLECT 'EM ALL!

Also, as has become the case lately, this issue of ***COMICS FEATURE*** contains a necessary explanation about something or other—in this issue, it's the story behind the lateness of last issue. No, Carol and I didn't decide to take a month off. Actually, ***FEATURE #10*** was sent to our printer very close to our theoretical "on sale" date. It got sent off to our printer, and all, it seemed, was right with the world (for about ten minutes, after which we started on ***ARTFORM***). However, difficulties arose with our printer while ***FEATURE #10*** was there—and so it stayed there. We all realize that it doesn't do our magazine any good to be late, and that it rendered our news section (in particular) almost useless. We feel lucky, however, that ***FEATURE*** is more than a vehicle for comics news and gossipy interviews, and that ***FEATURE #10***, late though it was, still contained enough research and commentary of timeless value to be worth at least the cover price—even weeks after the news section faded into insignificance. (And if you think we're going to try testing that opinion ***again***, think again! Publishing "Amelia Earheart-style" ventures is ***not*** our vocation.)

IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA, THE

FUNNY PAGES

COMIC ART SHOPS

ARE THE PLACE TO GO!!

WE PAY CA$H FOR OLD COMICS!
Superman is a registered trademark and is © by DC Comics Inc. and is used with permission
MIGHTY MOUSE TM
© TERRYTOONS/VIACOM INT.

OVER A QUARTER MILLION COMIC BOOKS NEW AND USED

•

BOUGHT - SOLD TRADED

•

UNDERGROUNDS NEW • OUT of PRINT

•

SCIENCE FICTION

•

PULPS

•

BIG LITTLE BOOKS

•

FANZINES

•

PLASTIC BAGS

•

ORIGINAL ART

•

CHARACTER COLLECTABLES

THREE BIG LOCATIONS!

BERKELEY
2512 TELEGRAPH AVE.
BERKELEY, CA. 94704
(415) 849 • 1179

SAN FRANCISCO
PIER 39
FISHERMAN'S WHARF
(415) 434-4045

1610 IRVING ST.
S.F. CA. 94122
(415) 661 • 5541

for wholesale new comics for your store, COMMON GROUND DIST. at our Berkeley address

YOU WILL SUBSCRIBE TO RBCC

RBCC has been a regular staple of comics fandom since 1961 and in December of 1981 will have achieved 20 years of non-stop publication, a feat unprecedented in comics fandom. 1981 will also usher in another new era for the magazine in other ways, as it will now be typeset and will feature color covers.

1981 will see the start of an authorized comic strip adaptation of Edgar Rice Burrough's last Martian novel, **John Carter and the Skeleton Men of Jupiter**, drawn by Bret Blevins. **RBCC** is the only place that you will find this important comics serial.

RBCC will also cover films and SF. There will be features of the new **Flash Gordon**, as well as coverage of important sf novels and collections, including examinations of Frank Herbert's **Dune** saga and the work of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

The comics scene will also be covered in features on Steve Ditko's Spider-Man which will examine what made this series unique and why it epitomizes what Marvel comics were all about in the early Sixties. Plus, an editor at one of the comics companies recently told a writer that "Comics are not meant to show feelings." **RBCC** will take that statement to task and show exactly why it's completely wrong.

RBCC is **the** magazine that covers comics, fantasy, science fiction, and film. Don't miss a single issue! A full year's subscription, four quarterly issues, is only $12.00.

Yes! Send me four issues of **RBCC**. I've included my $12.00 payment with my order.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Send this coupon or a copy, plus your payment to:
RBCC/New Media Pub., Inc.
12345 Starkey Road
Largo, Fl 33543

MORNING NOTICES

SEND YOUR **FEATURE** COMMENTS TO:
COMICS FEATURE 31½ ROBERTS RD. #2
CAMBRIDGE MASS. 02138

Chris Bryant
ASHLAND VA

Dear CF:
Before anything else, allow me to congratulate you on a successful year of publication. I hope you have many more.

Now to the complaint…

I've got to say that giving two pages of ***COMICS FEATURE*** to talk about what's on Saturday morning is a waste of space. I'll admit that when I woke up on Saturday morning, I generally turn on my TV to CBS and watch ***BUGS BUNNY***, but that's about it.

I'm not writing to say that he's right or wrong about these shows, it's just that I don't feel that it's important enough to warrant two pages. What is said (in general) is that the shows on Saturday morning aren't as good as they used to be (what is?) and that they are…dare I say it?…childish. Exactly. They are childish, because that's who they are written for.

I'll admit that I too feel that the current animation of Droopy would upset the late Tex Avery, but the people who make the cartoons are making them for children, and not for fans of art and animation. I feel that we lose sight of that point sometimes.

Chris, I think that you might be right as far as the actual quality of Saturday morning animation goes, but in your argument you're overlooking a few pertinent facts:

1) That being "childish" does not entail any sort of qualitative judgment. Too many critics somehow or other denigrate comics, literature, movies, etc., by stating, in effect, that they have elements in them which we be of particular appeal to children. If the new Saturday morning fare is not as good as they used to be (and you could well be right about that), it doesn't necessarily make them "childish." Some of the best animated television series ever, BULLWINKLE and BEANY AND CECIL for instance, were very appealing to children, yet had many elements in them which could—and did—interest a sizeable adult audience. They, too, were "childish," though—no getting around it.

2) COMICS FEATURE is a general interest specialty magazine (however equivocal that sounds), and that means that we should—and want to—cover many aspects of comics-related popular culture as we can. That includes animation, and Saturday morning fare is a vital part of that. We don't object, as you've seen, to publishing negative reviews about some particular program or series, but we don't feel that it's wise of us to up and decide that such-and-such an exponent of our magazine's alleged subject is unfit for coverage just because we don't like it or it's not what it used to be back when we enjoyed it. That's not constructive and it's unfair to our readers who read FEATURE with some hopes of keeping up with the current scene.

3) Also—no offense, now—we do find it somewhat incongruous that we should be urged to drop one section of a magazine devoted to commentary on comic books because the subject is "not important" and "childish." It reminds us of nothing so much as of the attitude of most of our acquaintances and family to FEATURE in general."Why write about comic books?" they say. "Aren't they unimportant and childish?" You see the point, I trust. We're not restricting ourselves solely to Saturday morning animation—we just can't justify ignoring it. If you or anyone else have any more arguments, though, we'll be glad to listen.

Ann Nichols
SIERRA VISTA, AZ

Dear Richard Howell and Carol Kalish:

Twice in ***COMICS FEATURE*** #9 I read that Jack Kirby incorporated The Eternals into the Marvel Universe under duress. It seems that I owe the man an apology. I had always blamed him for a move I'd protested from the first —in fact, if memory serves me rightly, I wrote letters begging Jack to keep The Eternals separate from the rest of Marvel. I bitterly resented it when the S.H.I.E.L.D. agents showed up. I think then I was already starting to burn out from the burden of keeping everyone and everything straight.

I hated seeing Jack Kirby go and hated it even more when he came back, but I am sorry I did him an injustice.

Well, Ann, it's never been confirmed sufficiently enough for us just what went on between Kirby and Marvel during either of their periods of contretemps for the editorial us to state that we're sure what happened when, but what we have heard certainly indicates that the Marvel Universe concept was being routinely used as an early-issue sales booster for almost every series that emanated from the "House of Ideas," and that THE ETERNALS was allowed to remain separate from the "Tree On Which Spider-Man was Born" (as George Olshevsky would have it), until it appeared that the series would remain a cult book—rather than an across-the-board success—without the tie-in impetus. We'd be happy to disseminate any other information on this topic. It is worth noting, however, that The Eternals, or any character in their series, never said or did anything that could be considered conclusive evidence that any of the Marvel characters were anything other than fictional beings.

Incidentally, you might be interested in reading the new Kirby comic when it's released—especially if your major objection to his latter days at Marvel was that he

couldn't (or didn't) keep the Universe continuity straight.

Lou Mougin
GRAHAM, TX

Dear Richard,
How's it goin'? I finally scored three copies of ***COMICS FEATURE*** from a travelling comic book salesman—#3, 5, and 7—and, since my ideological and pedantic ire has been raised by a few pieces, and I'm genuinely pleased by some of the material, I decided to give it to you, both barrels, right in the face.

Cat Yronwode's piece in #7 on ***STRANGE TALES*** was written well, and she expressed her views quite clearly, but (at the risk of being a traitor—we're best fan-friends) I'm gonna disagree with her. Doc Strange wasn't a drug strip, at least not during the ***STRANGE TALES*** - period—Ditko wouldn't have gotten near the stuff. He was so right-wing that, given his own head, he produced ***DICK TRACY***-derivatives like The Question and Mr. A, castigated hippies more than one strip (***BLUE BEETLE #5*** and ***DESTRUCTOR #4*** come to mind) and wrote pithy, if over-simplistic, defenses of his own brand of libertarianism. Strange didn't "trip out" to another dimension to grab cheap thrills; he did so, in every case, to duel an ethereal bad-guy on his own terms. The surreal landscapes heightened the tension, ranging from the realm of Dormammu's Mindless Ones to the terrifying domain of Nightmare (and if you don't take that adjective literally, just recall seeing Dr. Strange walk through those floating rattlesnake jaws in ***STRANGE TALES #116***!) They weren't the pleasant pipedreams of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

As for those who "liked the hard-hitting 007 convolutions of Nick Fury's adventures" to whom Cat confesses "I wouldn't know—I wasn't one of 'em" I must reply that I ***would*** know, because I ***was*** one of them. Though many have seen fit to issue putdowns of Stan Lee's ***S.H.I.E.L.D.*** stories, mostly to try to elevate Steranko to even greater heights, I will not join their number. Fury was toughness personified, Marvel's Dick Tracy, a pre-Jonah Hex figure from World War II. Back in those days, I knew you simply didn't mess around with Nick Fury. I could have envisioned a poor, misguided Doctor Octopus coming up against the one-eyed juggernaut; Nick would've shifted his cigar to the other side of his mouth, ripped his shirt, and then yanked Doc Ock's metal arms from their sockets and fed them to him without breaking sweat. If anybody could've saved us from an army of green-garbed baddies out to conquer the world, my money was on Nick Fury.

And yet...the tide turned. In the ***"Betatron Bomb"*** epic, Stan Lee (and Jack Kirby) built up suspense unbearably by having HYDRA thwart S.H.I.E.L.D. at every turn for months on end. First, the baddies launch into space a bomb capable of destroying all life on Earth, momen- before S.H.I.E.L.D. forces arrive; they can now blackmail the world. Next, HYDRA invades Tony Stark's factory and, under the very nose of the fellow who can become Iron Man if he just hadn't forgotten his fer-shlugginer attache case that morning, they kidnap Nick Fury! The tale ends with Fury gagged and strait-jacketed, humiliated by The Supreme Hydra in front of his cohorts, and a pair of emissaries blackmailing the United Nations representatives into conceding them world domination. Brother, that's a cliff-hanger!! And when Nick did get free (on his own—S.H.I.E.L.D. and HYDRA turncoat Laura Brown tried to help, but he beat 'em to the punch), we had no doubt that he'd wipe up the floor with the whole enemy installation, just like John Wayne. Of course, S.H.I.E.L.D.—led by good Howler-folk Dum Dum Dugan and Gabe Jones—did make the inevitable cavalry charge and help him round up hundreds of chartreuse fanatics, but Fury was the spearhead all the way...Formula, Stereotype...but it ***worked!***

Since every good spy agency requires a bad spy agency to fight, and since Marvel was too lazy to think of any better than HYDRA, they just revived them. Jim Steranko popped in about here, after one issue by John Buscema. First Steranko working over Kirby layouts, then on his own and co-plotting; then scipting and pencilling and inking entirely on his own. Steranko continued the formula and did it even better in the return of HYDRA. It was basically a recycled Betatron Bomb threat, with this one being a deadly plague bomb hidden in S.H.I.E.L.D. headquarters. Unless HYDRA were given control of Earth's governments, the world would perish from an incurable disease. Better yet: the mysterious head of HYDRA had assumed the identity of one of

What Becomes a Goddess Most?

Fury's closest aides, smuggled in HYDRA agents time and time again to attempt Fury's assassination,and finally had Fury strapped to a table on Hydra Island, surrounded by thousands of mortal enemies, only a second away from burning to a cinder with death-rays. In the midst of all that, we learned that the Supreme Hydra was none other than Fury's long-standing World War II nemesis, Baron Strucker! This time Fury ***did*** take on the whole of Hydra single-handedly and win, mainly by wits and guts, sneakily planting the Death Spore Bomb on Hydra Island so that it would annihilate only the bad guys themselves.

Compared to high-energy sagas like these, the interminable Dr. Strange vs. Umar, Zom, Living Tribunal, Nebulos, Yandroth, Voltorg saga just didn't rate. It had some suspense, to be sure, and the issues Roy Thomas and Marie Severin did were particularly good; but then Raymond Marais and Dan Adkins took over. Marais and his successor, Jim Lawrence, shared the idea that as soon as one mystic menace was taken care of, another one would rear its head without even a pause for breath by Dr. Strange (or the readership), and we were treated to countless scenes of turgidity and Adkins art swipes. A ***CASTLE OF FRANKENSTEIN*** reviewer put it quite bluntly: "Doctor Strange," said he, "is just muddling along."

I could go into the "***Yellow Claw***" serial, but I've said enough to give you the general idea. Lee and Steranko understood the basic thing about Nick Fury that later writers—even Steve Englehart—failed to grasp: he's John Wayne, for cryin' out loud! Fury ***cannot*** be beaten in hand-to-hand combat; you have to use some sneaky, under-handed Nazi-***cum***-HYDRA trick. Fury is ***not*** a petty politician or a spurned lover who picks a fight with Captain America or a fickle friend who turns on Iron Man and Cap whenever the wind blows from the South. He's a strong man and a good man—a corny throwback to a World War II propoganda movie, but more solid than Mount Kilamanjaro. For a long time there, he ***was*** more popular than Strange. But I doubt that "intolerant readers" had anything to do with ***STRANGE TALES*** splitting in two. Marvel was just expanding, that's all. The closely-allied strips in ***SUSPENSE*** and ***ASTONISH*** had all gained their own titles, and Fury and Strange were the last of the lot to do so, in March 1968, real-time. Not so coincidentally, Marvel tightened the screws on Strange about that time by hiring Denny O'Neil to wrap up the whole Yandroth series in two or three issues and then having Roy Thomas write shorter epics with not much run-on, where Strange could at least keep up residency requirements in Greenwich Village.

That's that!

Murray's "***Silver Age***" article was adequate, although I doubt that Junior Juniper's death in ***SERGEANT FURY #4*** was such an Earth-shaking move; Bob Kanigher and Joe Kubert had killed off Ice Cream Soldier in "***Sgt. Rock***" about two years earlier. Rock, and almost all of his DC-war comic compatriots, have practically always outpointed Fury and his crew in art and script. Gary Brown said that Magnus [Robot Fighter] was reared in Antarctica; he wasn't. He was trained and tutored by 1-A in a glass-dome home far below the surface of the sea. (Issue #1's blurb read "From the sea comes Magnus...") Actually, the theme was closer to ***1984*** than to ***LOGAN'S RUN***. Just make the Central Party head a robot and teach Winston Smith superkarate. The Doom Patrol didn't appear in "The following year" after The X-Men; they preceded them, and I can't believe that Stan Lee didn't cop the name "The Brotherhood of Evil Mutants" from the DP's foes "The Brotherhood of Evil," who debuted months before ***X-MEN #4***. I was ***there***, Charlie! And I see no basis for comparison between Warlock and Captain Atom. Starlin ripped off CA in his Captain Marvel (adding the sparkle-trail and making his hair white to emphasize their already-similar costumes—check out Jim's Captain Atom portrait in Charlton's ***CPL*** issue).

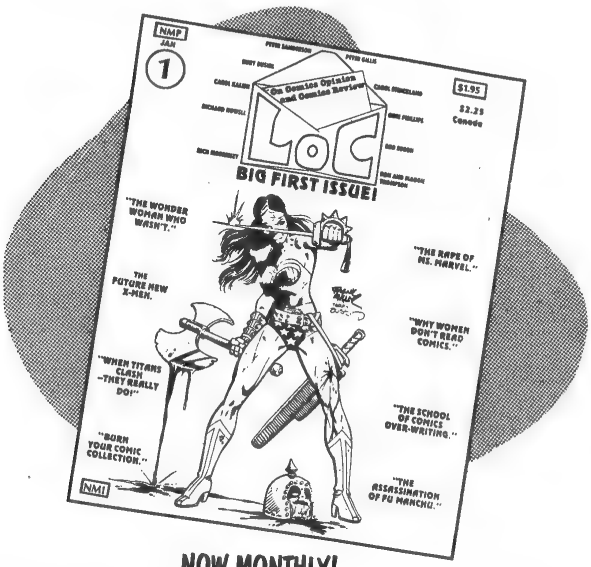
So now if anyone asks if we've heard the one about the travelling comic book salesman, we can tell them that we have.

You do seem to have gone over the S.H.I.E.L.D. series pretty thoroughly, Lou, for someone who was writing a letter, not an article. Equal time, I guess. STRANGE TALES always had a more sharply partisan-toward-one-strip-or-another audience than did its brother magazines TALES TO ASTONISH and TALES OF SUSPENSE, and fans still argue that "A" should have thrown "B" right out of STRANGE TALES, and made the world safe for militarists (or druggies, whatever). It's interesting to note, however, that the STRANGE TALES factionalized audience couldn't support either of the mother magazine's features once they had gone their separate ways. Another Stan Lee-type allegory?

It seems that The Doom Patrol did indeed precede The X-Men, although it should be pointed out—even to those who were there—that The Brotherhood of Evil and The Brotherhood of Evil Mutants each first appeared in the series of their respective antagonists in comics cover-dated the same month (March, 1964—thanks to Marv Wolfman for pointing this out). As nobody here at FEATURE has any idea how Marvel and DC cover-dates related to their actual on-sale dates in those days (we have trouble enough with these days), we'll temporarily take your word for it that The Doom Patrol's foes were the "originals," but if anyone else has any recollection of the sequence of events, please write and tell us.

WHY ZATANNA REALLY JOINED THE JLA
JEEZ-- IF I HAVE TO DO ONE MORE KID'S BIRTH-DAY--!!
AWRIGHT, YA LITTLE GOON-- PUT THE BUNNY BACK!!
GLAAH!
characters ©1981 DC Comics

SUBSCRIBE TO LOC



NOW MONTHLY!

Each issue of LOC is like getting hundreds of letters from fans with interests just like yours! Don't miss this opportunity to share in the BEST OF COMICS FANDOM. A full year's subscription, 6 big, fascinating issues, can be yours for only $7.50. YOU SAVE MORE THAN $4.00 OFF THE NEWSSTAND PRICE!

YES, I want to be part of LOC. Send me my first issue just as soon as possible!

Name _____

Street _____

City _____

State _____ **Zip** _____

Just fill out this coupon or a facsimile and send it and your payment of $7.50 to LOC, 12345 Starkey, Largo, Florida 33543.

DON'T BE LATE—JOIN LOC TODAY!

©1981 DC Comics

GENE COLAN LEAVES MARVEL FOR DC, WILL PENCIL BATMAN, WONDER WOMAN AND THE PHANTOM ZONE

Gene Colan, long-time artist for Marvel Comics, has resigned from that company and joined DC Comics. Colan left Marvel at the end of February and began work for DC March 1st. His new contract calls for him to pencil "around 48 pages a month." His three-year contract with DC does allow him, however, to do free-lance work for alternative comics publishers like New Media Publishing, Inc. and Eclipse. Colan is reportedly "very happy" with his move and with the enthusiastic welcome he has received at DC.

Colan's departure from Marvel was not unexpected. He had grown increasingly more dissatisfied with his working conditions there over the last several months. One of his particular complaints—being shunted off to non-mainstream titles—had seemingly been resolved by his assignment to ***CAPTAIN AMERICA*** and ***THE AVENGERS*** earlier this year, but these new assignments actually precipitated his departure.

Jim Shooter, who had assumed the writing chores on ***THE AVENGERS***, was not pleased with Colan's initial work on the title. According to Shooter, "He [Colan] was just not giving me what I wanted." This clash of creative vision between the title's writer and artist created considerable friction between them. Coupled with DC's encouragement and contract offers, the disagreement caused Colan to tender his resignation to Marvel before his contract with the company expired. Marvel accepted Colan's decision to leave early, and he signed his three-year work contract with DC immdeaitely.

Encouragement for the move seems to have come from a variety of sources. Several of Colan's former Marvel collaborators who now work for DC, including Marv Wolfman, had advised him to make the switch. Stu Reisbord of Cartoon Carnival, art agent for both Colan and DC editor Dick Giordano, campaigned actively for the move, as did many other friends and advisors. Finally Dick Giordano offered Colan an unprecented page rate for a DC newcomer and an opportunity to pencil ***THE BATMAN***.

Colan's first DC assignment is a 25-page ***BATMAN*** story written by ex-***BATMAN*** scripter Roy Thomas. According to Giordano, the story's length prevented it from having being assigned before, so it had "just been sitting around on the shelf." Thomas, when asked, commented that if he had known in advance that Colan was planning on switching companies, he "probably would never have left [the book himself]."

Giordano is uncertain which inker would best translate Colan's subtlely toned pencils to camera ready black-and white, and is considering "experimenting a little" before settling down with any one regular inker. Tom Palmer, according to Giordano, "has other commitments now, unfortunately." Giordano commented that if he had the time, he would probably ink Colan's ***BATMAN*** himself (based on Giordano's fondness for the character and his satisfaction with his other collaborations with Colan), but he admitted that anything other than an occasional fill-in on his part looked impossible. Currently Giordano has handed out copies of Colan's pencils to a number of potential inkers as tests to locate the most compatible style for Colan's work. Sources at DC indicate that the inkers are enthusiastically tackling these test pages, many commenting on how enjoyable it is to work on Colan's highly detailed full pencils.

Giordano has discovered a ***BATMAN*** inventory cover done long ago by Neal Adams, depicting Batman battling Dracula, and Colan and Marv Wolfman will probably do a fill-in ***BATMAN*** story based upon it.

Colan's other regular DC assignment was not announced until the middle of April. According to DC press liaison Roger Slifer, the delay was caused by the editorial difficulty of shifting through all the eager requests DC writers had made to work with Colan. "Everyone here is eager to work with him [Colan]," remarked Slifer, "He can do things with expressions that no one else can match. People are really competing for the opportunity to work with him." Slifer went on to say that DC was being very careful about its Colan assignments and sees him as an invaluable resource.

DC finally made a decision,

Above, Gene Colan. Below, his version of The Batman.

©1981 DC Comics

though, and Colan's other regular assignment will be the pencilling duties on ***WONDER WOMAN***, a title that has been suffering from sluggish sales for some time. Obviously, DC believes that Colan's moody pencils will spark readers' interest in the series, but the company has insured that the fan market will pick the book up by also assigning Roy Thomas to the book as its new writer. Thomas will abandon his duties on ***THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES*** in order to pick up ***WONDER WOMAN***, a series that he describes as being "near and dear to my heart."

The new creative team's first issue will appear in January, 1982 if all goes according to schedule. Editor Len Wein explained that Colan's first few issues will contain a partial revamping of Wonder Woman's costume. After considerable discussion, an editorial decision has been rendered to change Wonder Woman's bodice design from her current golden eagle motif to a stylized "W." Wein explained that the decision was made so that a Wonder Woman symbol could be licensed out in the same way that Superman's chest "S" has been.

Wein also indicated that the new team might very well concoct a Wonder Woman-Huntress cross-over, but warned that such a storyline would only be seen after the creative team became fully established on the new title. Roy Thomas was unavailable for comment on possible directions he intended to pursue on the title.

Colan is also being considered as the penciller for a variety of special projects including various mini-series and possible new series. He will definitely be pencilling Steve Gerber's Phantom Zone mini-series, a development that has greatly pleased Gerber, who commented that Colan would "be perfect for the series." Marv Wolfman has also been suggested as a possible collaborator to work with Colan in developing a new horror title for DC. ●

DC RAISES PRICE TO 60¢; ADDS PAGES

DC has once again announced a price rise in their regular comics line, this time from the current 50¢ price tag to 60¢, a 20% increase. The announcement came just a little over fourteen months after the last price increase. DC comics dated October 1981 and on sale in July will carry the new price.

According to various company press releases, Paul Levitz, DC Business Mangaer, and Roger Slifer, DC Direct Sales Representative, the increase reflects the rising costs of publishing. Slifer commented that "paper, printing, editorial costs—you name it—have all gone up this last year. We can't hold the price given our costs."

DC's price rise will correspond to the addition of even more editorial material than is already being packaged in each regular comic. Two more pages will be added to the new 60¢ comic, making a total of 27 story pages per issue. Each individual editor will be able to decide how these two new pages will be used; in some instances the additional pages will be used to increase the lead series, while in other cases the back-up series will be enlarged. There will be four ads and one text page (usually a letters column) in each issue.

DC is confident that their increase will soon be followed by the Marvel and other comics companies, a belief that Marvel is quick to deny. Jim Shooter emphatically denies that Marvel has any intention of raising its prices anytime in the near future. However, it should be remembered that Shooter made a similiar statement just a little over a year ago—right before Marvel announced that it was raising its price from 40¢ to 50¢.

DC's price rise will not affect either its line of 95¢ digests or 48-page dollar comics.

DC Publisher Jenette Kahn emphasized DC's increased number of story pages in her comments on the price rise:

"We... also managed to give some additional value by adding two more story pages." She also went on to imply that while Marvel and the other comics comics would probably soon follow DC's example and raise their prices as well, they would be unable to match DC's increased editorial content, a clear reference to Marvel's continued scheduling and production difficulties meeting editorial demands that are already less than DC's. ●

JACK KIRBY RETURNS TO COMICS

CAPTAIN VICTORY ON THE WAY

Jack Kirby, the man responsible for creation or co-creation of The Fantastic Four, Captain America, The Eternals, The New Gods, Mister Miracle, Spider-Man, the comic book version of Thor, The X-Men, The Newsboy Legion, ***BOY'S RANCH,*** the romance comic genre, The Inhumans, The Black Panther, Doctor Doom, etc., has completed a six-issue series of comic books to be released later this year.

They were commissioned and will be published by Pacific Comics, as the vanguard of Pacific's projected new line of comics. The lead character is named Captain Victory. The material will be both written and drawn by Kirby and inked by Mike Royer.

According to Pacific's David Scroggy, they could think of "few people better to start [their comics series] with" than Kirby, who was lured away from his present career as a movie production designer/animation designer to work on the project.

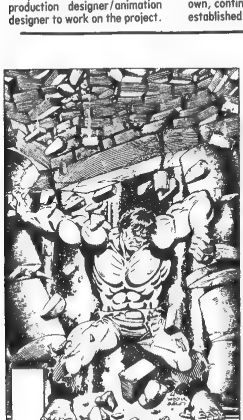
photo courtesy Marvel Comics Group

Pacific intends to handle the distribution entirely on their own, continuing the trend lately established by Gold Key, Marvel and DC towards exploring alternative distribution routes for comics. Captain Victory's comic will be printed at Sparta, it will be 32 pages, and should resemble the standard comic book of today in every aspect—except it will not be released for newsstand sale. Scroggy is confident that the print run of Captain Victory can be easily disseminated through the nation's network of comics stores, claiming that "the direct market themselves can best determine the needs of the direct market." The print run of ***CAPTAIN VICTORY*** is not yet set.

The comic will contain more story pages than the current industry leader in that respect, DC (approximately 28 pages per issue), and will contain some advertising. There is some chance that the series will be collected into an album format after the initial six-issue series of comics has been sold.

A more detailed report—including visuals—on the latest Kirby creation is scheduled for the next issue of ***COMICS FEATURE.*** ●

MARVEL STRUGGLES TO SUPPORT SCHEDULES



©1981 Marvel Comics Group

Marvel's recent spate of 75¢ "anniversary" specials may be curtailed somewhat in the future. Although in nearly every case, the addition of a "collectable" into the series' regular continuity resulted in more buyers than usual picking up that issue, and a good percentage of those buyers continuing with the series afterwards, Marvel's recent man-power shortage has resulted in tighter scheduling, more people doing more of their "regular" work, and thus, less time for creators to work on what is effectively a series of "specials."

While the extent of Marvel's scheduling problems remains vague, the company's production is at least three months behind. In fact the situation has reached such proportions that some books, ***SPIDER-WOMAN*** for one, have been reduced from a monthly to a bi-monthly status in order to relieve some of the pressure. Gene Colan's departure will put further strains on Marvel's already over-taxed art staff.

According to one source at Marvel, the deadline crunch is complicated somewhat by the company's new system of bonus payments to creative teams who remain on a particular book for a previously-designated number of ***consecutive*** issues. Since no one really wants to forfeit his or her bonus by allowing a fill-in to creep into the series' continuity, staffers are more committed to their individual books than in the recent past, and, consequently, have less free time for special projects or additional work as well as less tolerance for editorial assignments that might interrupt their regular work.

Conversely, some of the freelancers who intermittently contribute to Marvel series may well be induced to extend their stays long enough to earn a consecutive-issue bonus, as witness Marshall Rogers' projected six-issue stay on Roger Stern's ***DR. STRANGE.*** ●

NMP'S ADVENTURE ILLUSTRATED PREPARES FOR RELEASE

According to New Media Publishing editor Peter Gillis, the first of that company's graphic magazines should be released late this spring while a sister publication should go to press in early Summer. The first title, ***ADVENTURE ILLUSTRATED***, will feature three different comics series which explore some facet of the adventure story genre. Gillis emphasizes that ***ADVENTURE ILLUSTRATED***'s stories will provide its readers not only with solid storytelling and fascinating plots, but it will also feature continuing characters who "will star in various related adventures."

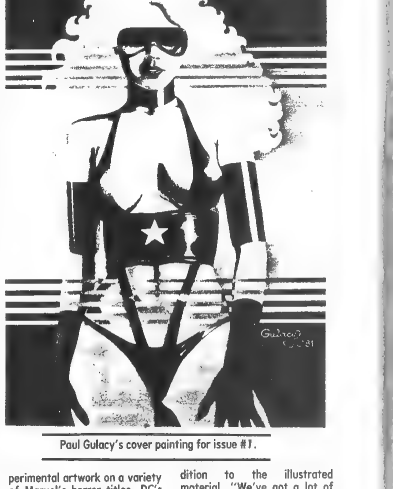
The first issue will feature stories by Doug Moench and Bill Sinkiewicz, John Warner and Tom Sutton, and Peter Gillis and Alan Weiss. The first issue's cover is by Paul Gulacy.

The Moench-Sinkiewicz story will be serialized over the first several issues of ***ADVENTURE ILLUSTRATED***. The first installment, entitled "***Magenta Core***," will be 20 pages long and will be the featured comics story. Gillis waxes enthusiastic over the story: "I don't think anything like it has been done before [in comics]. It's a ***very*** complex story with really riveting characters." According to Gillis, the series is set in the not-too-distant future, a future based upon the projection of many of today's social developments. Space has been conquered and at least partially colonized. Earth's space colonies, however, have rebelled against their mother planet. Gillis describes the story as being a "mix of all sorts of sf subgenres—first contact stories, space war tales, you name it, this one has got it. But at the same time, Doug [Moench] has really injected something new, something unique into it all. I don't want to say much more because I want the reader to be just as surprised by all the plot twists and character developments as I was."

Gillis' own story, which features his new western character Hosea Ransom, also seems to twist a traditional genre, the western story, into a new form. "I didn't want to write just another spaghetti western or a 'white-hat' story, so "***The Hands of Hosea Ransom***" is ***not*** a western that John Wayne or Clint Eastwood would feel comfortable with. It's got elements from both types of Western but they're mixed in a new way." Ransom's first appearance, a sixteen page story which will be the first installment of a continuing story, features a storyline that will hinge upon such plot elements as gypsies, greek fire, and Franz Liszt.

Alan Weiss will provide the pencils for the Ransom story. Originally Steve Leialoha was scheduled to ink, but he bowed out of the project at the last moment due to overwork. Gillis reports that a replacement has not yet been chosen for the series; however, he did indicate that Alfredo Alcala was a likely possibility.

The last comics series in the new magazine will be written by John Warner, former Marvel editor of that company's now almost-defunct black-and-white line, and penciled and inked by Tom Sutton. The story will be "around 12 pages" and will again be the first installment of a proposed multi-part story. Gillis reports that this Warner-Sutton series will feature "Space Pirates who steal people, technologies, and ideas." Warner is no stranger to comics sf having written the ***FLASH GORDON*** book for Gold Key and having created the "***Bioodstone***" series for Marvel. Sutton, on the other hand, is best known for his experimental artwork on a variety of Marvel's horror titles, DC's ***TIME WARP*** and ***STAR HUNTERS***, and Warren's ***VAMPIRELLA***.



Paul Gulacy's cover painting for issue #1.

Paul Gulacy's cover-painting will not relate to any of the three regular series. "Paul has done a very strange, very beautiful cover for us," reports Gillis. "It's a lovely painting of a striking alien woman. The strange thing about it is that Paul did it using just red, white, and blue. It has an almost Peter Max look to it."

ADVENTURE ILLUSTRATED will be a 64 page magazine. There will be text pieces in addition to the illustrated material. "We've got a lot of ideas about what to use the rest of the magazine for. We might run interviews with adventure writers of the caliber of Even Hunter (a.k.a. Ed McBain) or maybe overviews of major adventure classics. There is just a wealth of material for us to draw upon."

Current plans call for the magazine to be printed on 35 lb. newsprint. Although the price still has not be set, it will be "around $2.25" according to Hal Schuster, the magazine's publisher. It will be published quarterly. ●

NEW MEDIA EXPANDS COMICS LINE:

"SEMI-PRO" BOOKS SET TO DEBUT IN AUTUMN

New Media Publications will oversee the publication of a line of double-feature comic books "similar in format to the old ***TALES TO ASTONISH*** comics," explains editor Carol Kalish. Currently, the publication of one bi-monthly is secure, and, although a working title has not been decided on, the magazine itself is on NMP's schedule for September release.

The package will spotlight the work of young creators who, according to editor Kalish, "are almost good enough to be working for the professional comics houses, but for various reasons are not. Perhaps it's that they need about six months more of concentrated work. Perhaps it's just that they don't live in New York—any number of factors could come into play. The consistent aspect of their work is that they have the talent to tell intelligent, engaging stories, and we're offering them the chance to do so." The proposed package is a 32-page bi-monthly comic book, black and white, color covers, with 28-30 story pages per issue. The first three or four issues will include Kurt Busiek's and Scott McLeod's ***"Vanguard"*** series about a quintet of young people who are altered by an eccentric scientist to have sufficient power to protect Earth from the invaders from outer space, only to find that their greatest challenge comes from a source much closer to home. Tentatively scheduled to accompany ***"Vanguard"*** is Kurt Olsson's kleptomaniacally - inclined super-hero Hawkwind. Hawkwind is the scion of a family of gentlemen rogues who tries to combat his problem by directing his less-than-noble impulses to helping undermine organized crime. In the second issue, organized crime fights back by hiring The Silkie, a scientific-mutate in the pay of a mystery villain who will appear in the series which will replace ***"Vanguard"*** after issue #4, ***"The New Knights."***

"We're all very excited about the project," explains Kalish. "There's a lot of room for both growth and experimentation here, and those artists and writers whom we've contacted appreciate that more than anything else. Strangely enough, most of them appreciate the editorial guidance I'm giving them at least as much as the freedom. Obviously, the learning aspect of the project is very important to everybody." Kalish has two years experience as Assistant Editor of ***GALILEO*** magazine, as well as having been Contributing Editor to ***THE SCIENCE FICTION TIMES***, specializing in generating new comic strips for that paper. ●

LOC CLICKS

New Media Publications' latest magazine of commentary and opinion, ***LOC***, has proved to be such a success that it will boost its publication frequency from bi-monthly to monthly with its third issue. The first issue, featuring a Frank Miller/Terry Austin cover illustrating Murray Ward's essay ***"The Wonder Woman Who Wasn't,"*** sold out completely within one month after publication. ***LOC #2*** is scheduled for release in early April.

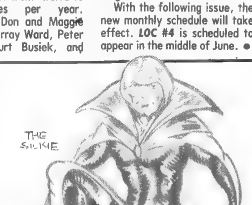
"***LOC*** is much less structured than any of our other magazines," explained co-editor Richard Howell, "so the direction which each issue takes is always a surprise to us, too. In a way, it's more fun to oversee than something as structured as ***COMICS FEATURE***, because there's not the monotony of format. I think that the readership appreciates that, too. We have a core of contributors, but we don't have to include any interviews or news or anything like that. It's looser and it's much more of a natural evolution of each issue's contents."

The core of contributors will remain more or less constant with ***LOC***'s shift from twelve to twelve issues per year. Regulars like Don and Maggie Thompson, Murray Ward, Peter Sanderson, Kurt Busiek, and Margaret O'Connell will be invited to remain regulars. "But now," comments Howell, "we'll be able to diversify more, too—without forfeiting the benefits of a highly skilled and reliable staff of writers."

LOC #3 is scheduled to be released in the middle of May, and will include: a Don and Maggie Thompson column on little-known "gems" of comics technique; Murray Ward on treatment of the handicapped in super-hero comics; Chuck Huber on ***"The Super-Hero as Vigilante, Part One,"*** Margaret O'Connell's ***"Helpful Hints for Marriage-Minded Scripters,"*** Bob Soron on why Detective Comics' progress parallels that of the company named after it; Paul Dini on ***"Growing Up with Uncle Scrooge;"*** Rich Morrissey on the changes in writing styles between the 1960s and the 1980s; Richard Howell on Timely's Venus; and Carol Kalish on ***"Role Models for Women—in Comics." LOC #3*** will also feature a painting of Wolverine, Batman, and The Spectre (illustrating Huber's ***"Super-Hero as Vigilante"*** piece) by fantasy artist Hannah Shapero. It will be 76 pages long and cost $1.95.

With the following issue, the new monthly schedule will take effect. ***LOC #4*** is scheduled to appear in the middle of June. ●

© 1981 Desperado-Eastern



© 1981 Desperado-Eastern

Above, the kleptomaniac Hawkwind. At right, his first super-opponent.

NEW X-MAN'S DEBUT DELAYED

STILL DAVE COCKRUM'S PROPERTY

Contrary to Marvel's announcement that Silkie, a new female mutant created by artist Dave Cockrum, would appear in the pages of ***X-MEN #140***, the mutant will not debut as scheduled due to the facts that contracts regulating her use have not yet been signed between her creator and Marvel. Dave Cockrum, who co-created The New X-Men, The Starjammers, and several other characters for the company in the course of his duties, is reluctant to just ***give*** the company yet another character who might be a potential goldmine ***vis a vis*** fan popularity and/or licensing. Before he allows Marvel (or Chris Claremont, writer of ***THE X-MEN***) use the character, he wants to negotiate contracts which will provide compensation for his creation.

Negotiations over this specific character are complicated by the fact that The Silkie is just one of a whole group of new characters that Cockrum has designed. He wants Marvel to purchase ***all*** of the characters in one lot rather than spend the time arguing over each character as Marvel has need of it.

Marvel obviously thinks that the contracts regulating the use of Cockrum's characters are near signing or they would not have already announced the inclusion of one of them in The New X-Men or released sketches of the characters to the fan press and dealers in order to generate interest in her debut. Cockrum, on the other hand, seems to be taking the position that ***nothing*** has been agreed upon as yet, and he is reluctant to even comment on the whole affair due to his concern over copyright protection for his creations.

The Silkie seems to be a shape-changer with aquatic abilities. The character's name is drawn from British Folkmusic which has a long tradition of songs featuring the Silkie, or were-seal (a man or woman who turns in a seal). Cockrum's character will not be the first super-powered figure to bear that name; DC's Silkie appeared in ***SUPER FRIENDS*** a few years ago in issue #14 as part of a super-group known as The Elementals, and the name has been by a few alternative publishers as well. ●

HEATH ON LONE RANGER, BATES ON 'BUCK'

The New York Times Syndicate's ***LONE RANGER*** comic strip has an artist at last—Russ Heath, the syndicate's original choice. The contracts have been signed between the syndicate and Heath, so his assignment is secure. Heath is no stranger to the field of newspaper strips, having only lately worked with Stan Lynde on ***LATIGO***, as well as having drawn the ***WALT DISNEY'S TREASURY OF CLASSIC TALES*** adaptation of Disney's forthcoming feature ***CONDOR-MAN***. The scripter of ***THE LONE RANGER*** strip is Cary Bates, writer of ***SUPERMAN, SUPER-BOY***, and ***THE FLASH*** for DC Comics.

Cary Bates has lately taken over the writing of The New York Times Syndicate's ***BUCK ROGERS*** comic strip from Jim Lawrence. Gray Morrow remains the strip's artist. ●

AN ALIEN INVASION, BUCK... OF THE MOST INSIDIOUS KIND! THE MINDS OF THE PEOPLE UPON, OR IN, WHAT WERE THE PICTURES!
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
AND WHAT'S WORSE—
DOCTOR HUER IS NOT ONLY ONE OF THEM, HE'S THEIR LEADER!
I WAS AFRAID YOU'D SAY THAT!
©1981 N.Y. Times Syndicate

MARVEL MOVIES

At New York's Creation Convention on Sunday, March 1, Stan Lee reported on various current projects at Marvel Productions. Except for the ***SILVER SURFER*** movie, none are more than possibilities as yet. They include:

A ***FANTASTIC FOUR*** motion picture.

A ***THOR*** motion picture, perhaps with Orson Welles as Odin. (Lee commented, "He will deliver no imperial edicts before their time.")

A live action ***HOWARD THE DUCK*** movie, to be written by the screen-writer of the recent Clint Eastwood film ***BRONCO BILLY***.

A "serious movie musical" about Spider-Man.

A television series about the New X-Men, to be produced by John Landsbury, producer of ***THAT'S INCREDIBLE*** and ***THOSE AMAZING ANIMALS***.

Dino DiLaurentiis' ***GHOST RIDER*** movie.

A Black Widow prime-time live action television series.

A ***CAPTAIN AMERICA*** Broadway musical in which the Spirit of Liberty transforms a balding, middle-aged man into Captain America.

A Marvel Hallowe'en horror special for prime-time, and a regular Marvel horror series for television.

Marvel is also trying to sell several series for Saturday morning this fall, including ***DAREDEVIL, SPIDER-MAN***, an animated version of ***GET SMART***, and one featuring a new "country-western" superhero named Denim Blue. If the latter sells, Lee says that Marvel will probably do a comic about him.

Lee reports that an English scientist has devised a process called "linear induction" which will enable a man on a surfboard to float several feet above the ground, and that that will be used in the filming of the ***SILVER SURFER*** movie. ●

MARVEL

A John Byrne/Terry Austin effort for the MARVEL COMICS CALENDAR 1982.

© 1981 Marvel Comics Group

***MARVEL SUPER-HEROES* #100** will be double-sized, reprinting ***INCREDIBLE HULK* #151** and **152**. The British **"*Hulk*"** series ends in ***MARVEL SUPER-ACTION* #34.**

John Byrne has left ***PETER PARKER, THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN*** after only one issue. After Terry Austin decided not to ink Byrne's ***FANTASTIC FOUR*** and Byrne took over the inking himself, his schedule became tight. When the new deadlines were announced ("Everything has to be in about three weeks sooner now," according to one source at Marvel), Byrne's time was fully committed to the ***FANTASTIC FOUR*** series, due in part to the time demanded by the upcoming ***FF*** 20th anniversary issue.

Byrne's single ***PETER PARKER*** will be inked by Vince Colletta.

***WHAT IF* #28** features **"*What if Daredevil Became an Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.?*"** written by Mike Barr, pencilled by Frank Miller and inked by Klaus Janson.

Among the mini-series being planned by Marvel are three by Bill Mantlo: **"*Rocket Raccoon*"** (from ***MARVEL PREVIEW'S* "*Sword in the Star*"**), **"*The Vision and the Scarlet Witch,*"** and an Avengers mini-series involving Kang and the return of the Celestial Madonna.

Jim Shooter did the layouts for both ***PETER PARKER, SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN* #56** and **57**, and will be doing another one as well.

There will be a ***THOR ANNUAL*** this year, to be written by Chris Claremont and pencilled by Luke McDonnell, involving Odin, Dormammu and Umar.

James Sherman is pencilling a three-part fill-in story for ***X-MEN***, to be written by Chris Claremont. In it, both The Hellfire Club and The Sentinels return.

A new villain has been created for ***SPIDER-WOMAN***. The Flying Tiger will be appearing in upcoming issues of the book. These production sketches of the new villain are by Steve Leialoha.

Flying Tiger

The 1982 Marvel Calendar will feature Spider-Man and many guest stars, making it a ***MARVEL TEAM-UP*** calendar, in a way. Artists include John Byrne, Terry Austin, Bill Sinkiewicz, and Alan Weiss. Roger Stern is compiling the entries for the various dates.

With Marvel investigating the mini-series format, there is a good chance that The Vision and The Scarlet Witch may be getting a try-out in their own feature.

Marvel may be reprinting some past black-and-white comics stories in graphic novel format in color and in some cases with extra pages. Possible candidates include the Chris Claremont-John Byrne-Terry Austin **"*Star-Lord*"** from ***MARVEL PREVIEW* #11** and the first Chris Claremont-Marshall Rogers **"*Daughters of the Dragon*"** story from ***DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU* #32-3.**

John Byrne will be introducing The Thing's oft-mentioned (but never before seen) Aunt Petunia as a character into ***THE FANTASTIC FOUR.***

Roger Stern is the new writer of ***HOWARD THE DUCK.***

Bill Mantlo's Captain Universe is among the heroes being discussed for the upcoming ***MARVEL UNIVERSE*** title.

© 1981 Marvel Comics Group

In the near future, the ***SERGEANT FURY*** reprint title will begin the series' reprints anew again, with ***SGT. FURY #1***, by Lee, Kirby, and Ayers. Several choice John Severin reprints will precede this move.

BIZARRE ADVENTURES #27 will feature a collection of mutants, all loosely grouped under the heading, ***"X-Men."*** It will cover feature a Chris Claremont/John Buscema ***"Phoenix"*** tale—a story which occured before she died, according to a source at Marvel—which may include details first conceived for the planned appearance of the late Jean Grey in one of Marvel's "preview" titles in 1977-8. Also included will be an ***"Iceman"*** adventure drawn by George Perez and Alfredo Alcala, a ***"Quicksilver"*** story drawn by Alan Weiss, and a ***"Nightcrawler"*** feature, by Dave Cockrum and Ricardo Villamonte. Several of the stories will be written by Mary Jo Duffy. A Paul Gulacy cover (of Phoenix) will complete the package.

Roger Stern is working on an ***EPIC*** story for Alex Toth. It involves "a sword-and-sorcery hero who looks like Errol Flynn and fights a sorceror who looks like Walter Brennan. The sorceror has a daughter who looks like Carole Lombard." The story is planned to appear in two separate chapters, both appearing in the same issue. Two chapters, you ask? Yes. According to Stern, "The second chapter takes place in World War I."

Stan Lee has vetoed John Byrne's plans to assassinate Franklin Richards, son of Reed and Sue Richards of The Fantastic Four.

Wonder Man may be getting his own regular comic.

Marvel U.K.'s ***"CAPTAIN BRITAIN"*** series, which has been running in England for roughly five years now, will be the backup series in ***MARVEL TALES*** starting with issue ***#131***. The series will start with the first installment done for England, which was written by Chris Claremont and drawn by Herb Trimpe.

Joe Sinnott has taken over the inking on Sal Buscema's ***ROM.***

Jack C. Harris, former editor and press liaison at DC, is now submitting free-lance work to Marvel.

Bill Sinkiewicz will ink as well as pencil ***MOON KNIGHT*** beginning with issue #9.

MARVEL PREMIERE #61 is the final issue.

Danny Fingeroth is the new writer on ***THE DAZZLER***. Jim Shooter will edit the book himself, and he will also edit Mark Gruenwald's forthcoming ***"Hawkeye"*** mini-series and may edit ***MARVEL TEAM-UP*** if and when Ralph Macchio becomes its regular writer. Shooter intends to edit books written by his less experienced writers in order to teach them the "underpinnings" of the craft.

DC

Upcoming in ***THE FLASH*** is a villain whose powers are based on computer technology. Issue #301 will feature some background on Barry Allen's punctuality-mad boss, Captain Frye, and #302-3 will resolve the continuing sub-plot of Barry's murderous father.

In an upcoming ***SUPERBOY***, Superboy visits the Old West and meets one of DC's western characters who will achieve some notoriety later on in his life.

Long-time penciller for the ***"Adam Strange"*** series, Carmine Infantino, has been assigned to resume pencilling the series' revival, currently running as a back-up in ***GREEN LANTERN***. Present scripter Laurie Sutton commented on the change: "I'm ecstatic. I'm ready to fly to Alpha Centauri without the benefit of a Zeta-Beam. Do you get the message? I'm very pleased."

A future ***SUPERMAN*** three-parter will explain, for the first time, the origins of The Superman Revenge Squad. The first installment will feature the Squad's latest attack on Superman, and the second chapter will continue the story, as Superman decides to turn the tables on his attackers and take the battle to the world which is their home base. The third part of the story will feature, according to scripter Cary Bates, "lots of tables being turned back and forth again."

SUPERMAN
50¢
THERE'S NOTHING I WON'T DO TO SAVE LOIS AND LANA!
AND I'LL DO ANYTHING YOU ASK!
HA, HA! SUPERMAN, THAT'S THE BIGGEST JOKE I'VE HEARD!
A KNIGHT AT THE LIFE OF SUPERMAN? HUMPH!
©1981 DC Comics

In an upcoming two-parter in ***SUPERMAN***, Lois Lane and Lana Lang contract the same disease which killed Ma and Pa Kent. The story, called ***"The Last Days of Lois and Lana,"*** features a turning point in the relationship between Lana and Superman. It also features the return of the old Lois and Lana friendship.

A forthcoming ***DC DIGEST*** will represent a selection of the best ***STRANGE SPORTS STORIES***, including the superhero/super-villain baseball game from the old ***DC SPECIAL*** series.

In issue #284 of ***WONDER WOMAN***, The Huntress teams up with her "older brother," the Earth-Two Robin.

Batman will team up with The Legion of Super-Heroes in ***BRAVE AND BOLD*** #179.

Superboy will be returning to The Legion of Super-Heroes when they travel to the 20th century in issue #280 of their own magazine.

UNKNOWN SOLDIER #256 will include the final installment of ***"Captain Fear."***

Madame Rouge and Captain Zahl, the real killers of the original Doom Patrol (the former rather reluctantly) will resuscitate in ***THE NEW TEEN TITANS #13***. According to scripter Marv Wolfman, a new Brotherhood of Evil will bow in shortly thereafter.

Issue #13 will also mark the first anniversary of DC's foremost fan-favorite title, and the celebration should include "something very special and of great importance to the series," according to DC fan liaison Roger Slifer.

GENERAL

Filmation, the animation studios responsible for this season's hit ***LONE RANGER*** program, has expanded into other horse-riding heroes ***PRINCE VALIANT*** and ***ZORRO***. Presentations are being done for each character, and, with the success of both ***THE LONE RANGER*** and ***THUNDARR***, prospects for adventure shows in general have increased for next season.

Ruby-Spears' ***THUNDARR THE BARBARIAN*** animated program will be expanded to an hour in length as of the next television season. ***THUNDARR***'s consistently high ratings (against such contenders as ***POPEYE***) are the impetus for the move. The subject (or subjects) of the additional half-hour have not yet been finalized, although solo adventures of Thundarr's companions Princess Ariel and Ookla the Mok are a strong possibility.

AMAZING HEROES DEBUTS

Michael Catron, one of the founding editors of ***THE COMICS JOURNAL***, is editing a new comics-related magazine called ***AMAZING HEROES***. It will debut in April and have a full-color cover by John Byrne. ***AMAZING HEROES'*** first issue will also feature an interview with Byrne, an article recounting the history of DC's original ***"Dial 'H' for Hero"*** series, and reprints of some syndicated strips (***STAR WARS*** and ***STAR HAWKS***). The new magazine has no official connection with ***THE COMICS JOURNAL*** although they share production facilities. ***AMAZING HEROES*** will be a monthly magazine. It will have 64 pages in each issue and cost $1.50 per copy.

Catron's announced plans for the magazine include a heavy emphasis on "historical articles," probably along the lines of those prominently featured in ***COMICS FEATURE***.

ART DEALER BECOMES COMIC STRIP VILLAIN

WHAT DID I SAY T' GET DR. SUE SO AGITATED, SANDY? I FIGURED SHE'D BE PLEASED THAT DR. LIXIR PLAYED SANTA CLAUS FOR TH' KIDS--
HOWARD STERN

MEANWHILE--
--McCLEW'S RIGHT! LIXIR DOESN'T EVEN HAVE A PRIVATE PRACTICE!
YEAH--AS CHIEF OF STAFF AND ADMINISTRATOR OF HARDBUCKS' MEDICAL COMPLEX--

--ANY MEDICARE CLAIMS WOULD BE BILLED BY THE HOSPITAL--
SO WHAT ARE YOU TELLING US, McCLEW?
BOYS--I BELIEVE LIXIR IS THE "GRAY AVENGER"!

The latest "heavy" in Leonard Starr's popular ***ANNIE*** comic strip is based on a real person: original comics art dealer Stu Reisbord, owner of Cartoon Carnival. Reisbord has had some dealings with Starr in the course of his business, and recently, Starr bent a long-standing, self-imposed restriction against the inclusion of the likenesses of friends and close acquaintances into the comic strip continuity, and introduced a character based on Reisbord.

"I've always wanted to be in a comic strip, so I asked him if he'd draw me," Reisbord told the ***PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER***. "He said he would, but he told me that nobody—but ***nobody*** remembered a good guy. Everybody remembers the bad guys. So he said he was going to make me mean and sleazy."

Reisbord's ***doppelganger***, "Stu McClew," is mean and sleazy several times over. He is a shady, corrupt private investigator who not only seems to enjoy his slimy personality, but who views everyone else's motives as if they were his own: mean and sleazy. In the current ***ANNIE*** sequence, McClew has been hired to investigate "The Grey Avenger," a mysterious figure who exposes fraudulent Medicare practices (and practitioners).

Reisbord is very flattered by the attention his comic-strip alter ego has been garnering, and has lately adopted the habit of wearing an Irish walking hat "similar to McClew's." Do comic strip characters have a way of overtaking the lives of those who modeled for them? Not entirely, Reisbord assured ***COMICS FEATURE***, explaining that adopting McClew's headgear was as far as he intended to go in following the unenviable private eye's lifestyle. Reisbord also recounted an example to support his position: Back in 1958, Leonard Starr included the now-famous face of young actor Larry ("J.R. Ewing") Hagman as model reference for a character in Starr's award-winning ***MARY PERKINS ON STAGE*** comic strip. Hagman's comic strip persona was a conscientious rookie policeman.

The ***WINNIE WINKLE*** newspaper strip has acquired a new artist, and from the signature, the strip's new look is courtesy of the Joe Kubert School.

MAD FALL 1981 SUPER SPECIAL #36, released in April, is a reprint collection of many of ***MAD***'s various comic strip (and book) parodies, such as ***"If Famous Authors Wrote the Comics," "COMICLAND Magazine,"*** and ***"The MAD Comic Opera."*** It is a 96-page package of classic material, square-bound, and $1.50.

©1981 EC Publications

NMP COLLECTOR'S VOLUMES

RBCC, the prestigious fan publication now published by New Media Publications, will celebrate its long heritage by issuing a ***BEST OF RBCC*** anthology volume over the Summer. It will feature some of the best and most important pieces of writing and artwork from ***RBCC***'s long history, chosen by editor James Van Hise and publisher Hal Schuster. Current plans call for it to be a 100-page package, squarebound, with a stiff paper cover. It will cost $5.95.

THE SILVER AGE OF COMICS, a collection and expansion of the much-lauded series of articles in the first six issues of New Media Publications' ***COMICS FEATURE*** magazine, will also be released as a collectors' volume over the Summer. It will be edited by Murray Ward and will feature a full-color painted cover by Bill Black. It will also be a 100-page package, squarebound, and with stiff paper covers. Publisher Hal Schuster is very excited about the project, which he describes as "the type of historical comics work that will be of great value to comics researchers in the future—and which nobody seems to do but us."

STOP!

HOW MUCH ARE YOU LOSING

BY **NOT** BUYING FROM US??!!

TO CALCULATE HOW MUCH YOU ARE LOSING BY NOT BUYING FROM US — FILL IN AN AMOUNT OF MONEY FOR EACH OF THE POINTS BELOW AND TOTAL YOUR MONTHLY LOSSES !

- TOTAL YOUR EXPENSES OF GOING TO AND FROM YOUR PRESENT PLACE (S) OF PURCHASING NEW COMICS —— (a) BUS, GAS, PARKING, ETC ! .
- CALCULATE HOW MUCH TIME YOU MUST SPEND GOING TO YOUR PRESENT PLACES OF PURCHASES AND TIME SPEND LOOKING FOR YOUR MATERIAL —— THEN, MULTIPLY BY HOW MUCH YOUR TIME PER HOUR IS WORTH !
- MULTIPLY THE ABOVE TWO FIGURES — BY THE NUMBER OF TRIPS A MONTH YOU MAKE !
- FIGURE HOW MUCH VALUE IS LOST ON YOUR BOOKS IF YOU ARE FORCED TO BUY LESS THAN MINT COPIES !
- TOTAL HOW MUCH EXTRA YOU'VE SPENT BUYING — ISSUES YOU'VE MISSED AT HIGHER BACK ISSUE PRICES !
- CALCULATE THE AMOUNT LOST BY NOT TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE 20% OFF RETAIL THAT WE OFFER TO EVERYONE !
- ADD IN AN AMOUNT APPROXIMATELY EQUAL TO THE AMOUNT OF FRUSTRATION AND AGGRAVATION YOU MOST PRESENTLY PUT UP WITH ——— !

NOW THAT YOU'VE TOTALED YOUR LOSSES — ASK YOURSELF WHY YOU ARE NOT BUYING FROM US !

DOUG SULIPA'S COMIC WORLD

AFTER NINE YEARS OF FAITHFUL AND RESPONSIBLE SERVICE (SUCH THAT OUR BACK ISSUE MAILING LIST IS NOW 10,000 STRONG) IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE AN EXPANSION OF OPERATIONS, OUR **NEW COMICS SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE**

WE CARRY — MARVEL'S D.C.'S GOLD KEY'S CHARLTON'S HARVEY'S WARREN'S ARCHIE'S GEMSTONE'S AND RELATED FANZINES MAGAZINE'S PAPERBACKS HARDCOVERS DIGESTS GROUND LEVEL COMICS AND MUCH MORE (WHEW!)

COMPARE; WE DARE YOU TO FIND A BETTER OFFER THAN THIS!

- **WE GIVE A 20% DISCOUNT ON MOST NEW ITEMS!**
- EVERYTHING IS SECURELY WRAPPED, MAILED FLAT AND SENT IN — MINT — CONDITION !
- TO MEET YOUR NEEDS, WE CARRY ONE OF THE WIDEST AND MOST COMPLETE SELECTIONS AVAILABLE !
- SEND US A STANDING ORDER WITH THE TITLES THAT YOU COLLECT AND NEVER MISS AN ISSUE !
- YOU PAY ONLY EXACT POSTAGE AND A 50¢ HANDING CHARGE — NO HIDDEN FEES !
- WE GUARANTEE SATISFACTION —— IF YOU DECIDE TO DISCONTINUE OUR SERVICE WE IS ISUE IMMEDIATE CASH REFUNDS —— NO CREDIT SLIP GARBAGE
- WE DO NOT JUST CLAIM THE ABOVE —— WE DO IT !!

IN THE CASE OF A ONE SHOT OR SPECIALTY ITEM YOU WILL BE NOTIFIED IN ADVANCE SO THAT YOU MAY ORDER THEM IF YOU WISH. EVERYTHING YOU GET WILL BE CURRENT — —IN MOST CASES YOU SHOULD GET THEM BEFORE THEY OFFICIALLY HIT THE STAND.

IN OUR SYSTEM YOU SET UP AN ACCOUNT WITH US WHERE YOU START WITH AN INITIAL DEPOSIT (ESTIMATE YOUR DEPOSIT BY YOUR PLANNED PURCHASES FOR THE NEXT ONE TO TWO MONTHS) AND AS THE ISSUES COME OUT WE WILL SHIP THEM TO YOU AND CHARGE THE AMOUNT OF THE SHIPMENT AGAINST YOUR ACCOUNT. YOU JUST KEEP SENDING MONEY TO KEEP YOUR ACCOUNT AT A LEVEL AND A STATEMENT IS SENT WITH EVERY SHIPMENT SO THAT YOU ALWAYS KNOW WHERE YOUR ACCOUNT STANDS. IF YOUR ACCOUNT RUNS OUT OF FUNDS WE WILL HOLD THE ISSUES FOR YOU UNTIL YOU REPLENISH IT

SEND YOUR LIST OR WRITE FOR MORE COMPLETE DETAILS. **NOW** — JOIN THE THOUSANDS OF MY OTHER SATISFIED CUSTOMERS AND SAVE MONEY AT THE SAME TIME. NO ORDER IS TOO LARGE OR TOO SMALL. START YOUR OWN COMICS CLUB AND QUALIFY FOR THE DEALERS RATE.

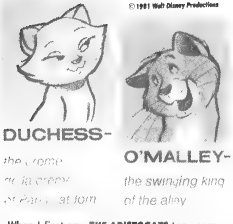
DEALERS

WE WHOLESALE AT 30% OFF (PLUS EXACT POSTAGE) TO ANYONE WHO ORDERS BOOKS A MONTH (RETAIL) ON A REGULAR BASIS WRITE FOR DETAILS

(THE MAN BEHIND IT)

DREAMS EDGE •BOX 174 •POSTAL STATION C •WINNIPEG, MANITOBA •CANADA (R3M 3S7)

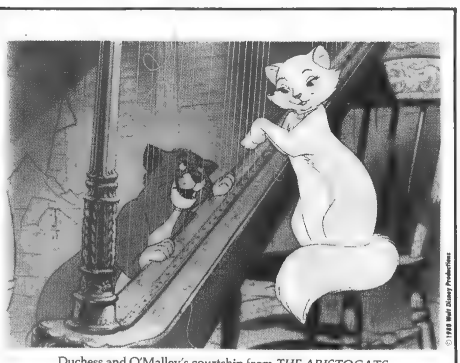
WHY NOBODY ARTS



When I first saw ***THE ARISTOCATS*** ten years ago, I didn't enjoy it much, buy I really wasn't sure why. Since then, I've learned a great deal about the medium, so when I saw the film again recently, I didn't enjoy it any more, but I now know what the reasons were for my initial dislike.

An animated character reflects the inventive capabilities of its creators. This includes animators, story people, colorists, voice actors, and the many other craftsmen who are responsible for a completed feature film. The story people must exercise their imaginations in their effort to concoct appropriate personalities for their leading players which not only sparkle in their own right but are ideal vehicles for the advancement of the plot. The animators must reinforce these personalities through their visualizations of the characters. Some instances of fortuitous expert concept caricature have, in the past, resulted in almost over-poweringly "realized" animated characters. In addition, the colorist can complement the earlier creators' visions through subtle use of tones and color blends which can almost unconsciously reinforce the viewers' understanding of the characters. Finally, the voice actors should add the final element to the characterizations, investing the cartoon figures with audial idiosyncracies such as accent, inflection, etc. which can individualize the characters beyond what has already been achieved visually.

Walt Disney Studios has traditionally been hailed as the master of character animation. Although their productions occasionally lapse into sentimentality, the Disney Studios have still managed to unleash on the world such masterpieces as the terrifying, school-marmish enchantress Maleficent, the charmingly naive Lady, the foxy J. Worthington ("Honest John") Foulfellow, Captain Hook, Cruella DeVyll, and a host of other memorable characters.



Duchess and O'Malley's courtship from *THE ARISTOCATS*.

Indeed, the story people seem preeminently aware of the importance of characterization in animated movies. All Disney's classic animated features are earmarked by careful development of at least one (and oftentimes several) main character(s) who seize the audience's interest through attributes independent of their place in the plot—which in turns provides the momentum for the audience's appreciation and enjoyment of the story.

In some cases, a talented team of artists can make a character triumph over the most dismal of scripts, and the movie will become a success due to that character's wide appeal. When a lead character is bright, alive, and original, then so is the movie it's in. When it's not, the result is very much like ***THE ARISTOCATS.***

When development began on ***THE ARISTOCATS*** in the late 1960s, the story people at Disney had decided to do a picture about a family of cats in 1910 Paris who fell heir to a vast fortune. As the story would be told from the cats' point of view, it seemed the most feasible to do as a cartoon. As a half-hour featurette, ***THE ARISTOCATS*** could have been a charming, simply-told story. Examining the feather-weight plot, though, there just isn't enough to sustain a ninety-minute feature—and yet, that's exactly what they did with it—they stretched it out, with the central idea of the story (abandoned cats trying to find their way home) getting lost in a mishmash of goofy characters and protracted slapstick bits. ***THE ARISTOCATS'*** heroes (Duchess, her three kittens, their benefactor, O'Malley) wander from one adventure to another, and more than half the movie advances before it becomes clear that no plot direction has been established. The story people are so busy bringing in novelty characters like "veddy proper" English geese, drawling Southern hounds, and love-bead-wearing hippie cats (yes, in 1910 Paris) that the pacing of the film suffers almost as badly as does the poor viewer, still gamely trying to figure out what's going on—and where it's going.

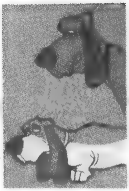
Duchess and O'Malley, the lead cats, have their personalities totally dictated by the public personae of the actors supplying their voices, Eva Gabor and Phil Harris, respectively. Unlike the classic pre-1960 Disney

WANTS TO BE AN

TOCAT

by Robert Rhodes

ROQUEFORT-
the big cheese detective



NAPOLEON & LAFAYETTE-
hillbilly hounds who get to the seat of the problem

Voices -- Pat Buttram
George Lindsey

©1981 Walt Disney Productions

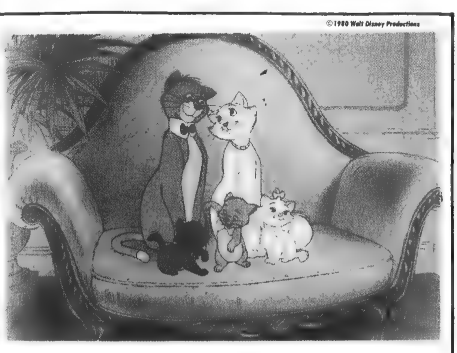
animated features, the animators didn't sit down and create an engaging character and then try to find a voice to fill it. This time they signed the celebrities and then built the movie's characters around their voices. When an animated character is constructed this way, it comes across as uninspired and derivative on screen no matter who is doing the voice. The image of the celebrity is too strong, and the audience can't accept the character as a separate being. To compensate for this, the animators inserted a variety of strange creatures into the film, in the hopes that they would inject some life into the proceedings and relieve the pressure on the essentially-cardboard heroes. Well, unfortunately, in ***THE ARISTOCATS***, there are too ***many*** zanies brought in, too ***often***, and they do nothing to further the plot. When Napoleon and Lafayette (the farm dogs) run Edgar (the butler) off the road, they complete their one task central to the workings of the plot—namely allowing Duchess and her kittens the chance to escape. Why then is the audience forced to sit through a protracted bit later on in the film featuring the same characters, doing basically the same thing? Because Napoleon and Lafayette are presumed to be funny characters, that's why. Halfway through the picture, the Disney story people must have realized that Duchess and O'Malley were very dull characters, and manufactured another scene with the dogs to liven things up. Well, unfortunately, the movie is not titled ***LAZY HOUNDS WHO BITE PEOPLE***, it's ***THE ARISTOCATS***, and when the story people first encountered the problem of their uninspired leading characters, they should have gone back to their characters' original concepts and strengthened ***them***, instead of giving the supporting cast more and more diversions to perform.

Another problem I had with ***THE ARISTOCATS*** is neither totally story or character motivated. There is a very apparent and surprising (for a Disney feature) over-use of stock footage in the film which cheapens its overall look. The whole sequence at the finale is simply the ***"Everybody Wants to be a Cat"*** dance number from earlier in the film shot against a new background. It's as if the animators got to a certain point in the production work, said "The Hell with it," and began re-mounting bits of previous scenes to tack on to the end. Indeed, it appears as it the only real fun the animators had with the movie were the dog scenes, which featured some fine fast-paced animation, and one or two genuinely inventive sight-gags.

The thing that is the most displeasing about ***THE ARISTOCATS*** is the writers' total disregard for the reality of their own story. The viewer is told that the action of the film takes place in France after the turn of the century, but outside of a few background shots of the Eiffel Tower, the movie offers nothing else with which to support that claim. Every character used American 1970s slang, and no one, except for some walk-on humans, had a French accent. Most ironically, a character called Scat Cat, who led an international band of musical cats, doesn't even have a French cat as a member of his musical group.

And I hope someday that someone will effectively explain to the Disney people that words like "square," "groovin'," and "swingers" are not cute or funny, and that they rather only cheapen and date a film. It was bad enough in ***JUNGLE BOOK***'s scene with the be-bop apes, but in ***THE ARISTOCATS***, the phrase "Everybody wants to be a swingin' cat" is thundered over the soundtrack so often that one really hopes that the movie will soon end, so that the audience's subjugation to the Disney writers' oppressive and rather paradoxical "Up with swingers, down with squares" point of view will cease. Well, the squares came down, all right. They came down and wrote ***THE ARISTOCATS***. Everything about it is so processed, so formulized, so exclusively intent on making it look like previous Disney successes like ***LADY AND THE TRAMP*** and ***ONE HUNDRED AND ONE DALMATIANS*** that ***THE ARISTOCATS*** is totally devoid of its own sense of humor and fun. Everybody wants to be a cat? Maybe in ***GAY PURR-EE*** or a ***TOP CAT*** re-run, but not in ***THE ARISTOCATS***. ●

©1980 Walt Disney Productions



This happy family group forms the core of *THE ARISTOCATS*.

Don't miss
COMICS FEATURE #12,
which will contain
a special, exclusive preview
of NMP's

ADVENTURE

ILLUSTRATED

EVERY SETTING
EVERY TIME
THE FINEST ARTISTS
THE BEST SCRIPTS
ALL WITH ONE THING
IN COMMON:

ADVENTURE!

looking ahead at DC

ROY THOMAS

When Roy Thomas joined Marvel Comics in the middle 1960s, he was the vanguard of a new generation of comics scripters. His fine sense of craft and his honed commercial sense have kept him at the forefront of comics writers even now, after several generations of comics scripters have come and gone. Thomas has served as editor of Marvel Comics, and was the first —and the last—of the Marvel writer/editors. Last year, Thomas ended his fifteen-year career at Marvel and joined DC Comics.

Roy Thomas aboard a World War II submarine.

Roy Thomas spoke with COMICS FEATURE about his new projects—at DC and elsewhere—during early March of this year. The interview was conducted by Carol Kalish and Richard Howell, transcribed by the (recovering, even now) Paul Dini, edited by Howell, and edited some more and approved by Thomas.

Thanks to DC press liaison Roger Slifer for supplying FEATURE with material from the upcoming Thomas DC Comics.

Photograph courtesy of Alan Waite

COMICS FEATURE: You've been working as your own editor, by our count, something like eight years now.

THOMAS: Officially, yes.

CF: How is it working with someone else as your editor after all those years?

THOMAS: Well, I can't say that things won't change at any time, because maybe it's a honeymoon period, or something like that—like Reagan's supposed to be getting—but I have to say (and my friend Gerry Conway told me this would probably be the way it was going to be before I came over—based on his own experience having worked at both places over the last two years) that it's really been not dissimilar from being my own editor in a lot of ways. And at the same time, I think I get a lot of the advantages of editing which I've always wanted: somebody to talk over some ideas with when I'm feeling a little dry—someone in the comics field—without imposing on either Gerry Conway (one of two people out here who are currently working in the comics field ***and*** working for DC on related-type books), or upon somebody else who is not in the comics field, and therefore can always be of more limited use no matter what other insights and ideas they can give me. It's nice to be able to talk to Dick Giordano or Len Wein, or Mike Barr (who's now editor of ***THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES***), or Julie Schwartz, and get some ideas. To date, I can say that everything has been constructive, and treated with kid gloves. I think that so far they have basically liked the majority of what I've done, so that there haven't been any problems. In many ways, it's taken off some of the burden I used to have trying to keep on top of the artist, I'm still in touch with them. (I try and keep in touch with the artists on the books I work on, for the most part, because I think a better story comes out in the long run.)

CF: Do you think that you have more insight into what your editor is actually going to be asking, and thus have less need to have any editorial interference in your work?

THOMAS: I would think that I have an additional advantage in that I worked with the best, and by far and away the most important, comics writer to have come out of comics in the last two decades—Stan—who is unmatched, unapproached, I think, by any other writer. There are, of course, reasons that make me think a certain way about him, just because I spent so many years working

NOT IF WE CAN HELP IT, MARKO! MAGNUS— USE PLAN #-1!
WHOMP!
WITH ALL DUE CELERITY, CYK!
GO ON AND ATTACK ME, WEAKLINGS! DON'T YOU SEE THAT'S JUST WHAT I WANT?
HE SEEMS MORE CONFIDENT...MORE POWERFUL THAN EVER! WILL OUR OLD METHODS REPEAT HIM THIS TIME?
YOU'RE BELLOWIN' IN THE DARK, JUGGY—AS IF YOU HAD A CHANCE!
©1983 Marvel Comics Group

with him and working for him. But on the other hand, there isn't anything—despite all the flourishes of people since then, and all the things that are reactions to him, that are inspired by him, and which go beyond him in various ways, by myself and by a lot of other people—there hasn't been anything that has negated the basic Stan Lee/Jack Kirby approach to comics that evolved during the 1960s. Everything since then has been refinement. There was an old saying that philosophy consists of a series of footnotes to Plato. And I feel in recent comics that comics writing, and for the most part, superhero drawing, consists of a series of lengthy footnotes to Stan Lee and Jack Kirby—for the most part, again.

CF: That's interesting. Do you feel that the present-day DC product is patterned after the old Stan-and-Jack blueprint?

THOMAS: Not patterned after it. I merely said they were the two most important practitioners by far, and they can hardly help being influential. Obviously there are a lot of other influences, in many ways. For instance, I think that Neal Adams—who was in some ways the most influential artist at DC (even though he's not working here) [in that] Dick Giordano, Rich Buckler, Mike Grell, and other people who draw somewhat like him [are working at DC]—along with Kirby, is the other main stylistic influence. But even Neal, when he came into the field, while he was not influenced by Kirby, very soon came to terms with the Kirby style and tried to find a different way to do the same kind of exciting comics. That's not to denigrate a lot of other very good artists, whom I would rather work with than either of those two gentlemen. (Laughs.) They are people with whom I've enjoyed collaborating on those rare occasions that I did.

There are just a very few giants. In terms of writers, Stan pretty much stands alone in terms of modern comics writers. There are a lot of writers who are better than he is in various ways—even I am in some ways, even though I'm influenced by him more. There are a lot of people who have their own styles, but at the same time, they're not anywhere near as influential. I think a guy like Denny O'Neil, who is a big stylistic influence because he came into the field just shortly after I did, became much less like Stan in some ways than he might have been had he stayed at Marvel. And he was very influential. To compare him and Stan, though, or to compare Englehart and Stan, or let alone me and Stan, or any of those people—Gerber, any of us—would be just ludicrous. Everybody has maybe one successful book or so, but it's not an approach. It's not a style that permeates a company and turns a company around the way that Stan's writing—combined with the art of Kirby and Ditko and others—virtually transformed the field in the 1960s—and had a decade-long influence that is still with us. After all, Marvel is still influenced by him somewhat, even if it's only something to react against.

I guess it's so obvious to me that from the middle 1960s, in particular, onward, Stan and Jack were the two major influences on the field, and the two best influences on the field, and the two best influences on the field, for the most part. It's hard for me to imagine anyone thinking anything different, I suppose, despite my admiration for a lot of other writers and artists.

"IT JUST SEEMED TO ME THAT EACH GROUP WAS SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT AND [THAT] WOULD FORCE ME TO TREAT THEM SOMEWHAT DIFFERENTLY."

CF: At DC, you're presently working on two or three group books.

THOMAS: So it seems.

CF: And you've been associated with many group books at Marvel. What draws you to that particular type of comics?

THOMAS: Well, on an unconscious, subconscious, preconscious level, whatever you want to use, I don't know. I can only hazard guesses: I was a little more withdrawn as a child, and read more than the average kid, and so forth, and smaller than most people my age, even though I was always a little bit of an outsider—a little bit strange, I suppose. But I fully adjusted by the age of four-and-a-half, or five, before I had gone to school, so it certainly doesn't reflect any experiences in grade school, public school, anything of that sort. I developed an affinity for the group book, in particular, ***ALL-STAR COMICS*** was just always fascinating to me, and that's why I wanted to write them when I went into the comics field. There was an additional coincidence that when I went into the field, the first series I was given as a regular series to write, even though I had written one or two ***DOCTOR STRANGE***s, one totally re-written ***IRON MAN***, and so forth, the first real series I was given to write was ***SGT. FURY AND HIS HOWLING COMMANDOS***. It had seven characters. The first super-hero series I was given to write was ***THE X-MEN***. And not too long after that was ***THE AVENGERS***, which was the book that had the closest potential at Marvel to become ***THE JUSTICE SOCIETY***, being that it had two or three characters that also had other series going, elsewhere. So as if a natural thing, I gravitated toward the books, and it seemed as if they gravitated toward me.

CF: Working on that many group books at one time, and a lot of them along the way, how do you keep them separate, just to yourself? Do you treat the group dynamics differently? Or do you let the charac-

ters do the dictating?

THOMAS: Well, it was relatively easy with the Marvel books because they had certain what you'd call group dynamics before I came to them. I altered them in some ways. I think my ***AVENGERS*** were closer to a ***JUSTICE SOCIETY/JUSTICE LEAGUE*** feel, and that was quite on purpose. I didn't make that attempt ever on ***THE X-MEN***, either with Werner Roth right after Stan left, or when I came back with Neal Adams. There were other influences at work, and also by that time, I had other ideas which could be developed independently. I never gave it a lot of thought; it just seemed to me that each group was somewhat different, and the internal dynamics of the group would force me to treat each somewhat differently. on the other hand, there were bound to be certain similarities between ***THE AVENGERS*** and when Stan was writing ***FANTASTIC FOUR*** and ***THE AVENGERS***. You'll find a lot of differences, but you'll also find a lot of similarities. As a matter of fact, it was the similarities between ***THE AVENGERS*** and ***THE X-MEN*** and ***FANTASTIC FOUR***, which was a group book too, in its own way, it was the similarities between them more than the differences that were the reasons for their success. I'm not talking about my own writing here, but Stan's writing, and Kirby's drawing or influence on other people's drawing. They alternated all those books, and of course, ***SGT. FURY***, which was attempting to do the same... you remember the first issue advertised the ***FANTASTIC FOUR*** style....

CF: Yeah.

THOMAS: ...in a war book, basically. And that was on purpose.

AND SO, MIDST ASGARDIAN POMP AND PAGEANTRY, THE TOURNAMENT BEGINS--
TO THE VICTOR SHALL GO THE SHINING SABER
SECOND ONLY TO RANDALL'S FLASHING BLADE.
BUT, 'TIS NO MERE TROPHY FOR WHICH MY MIND DOTH DWELL--
'TIS THE TROUBLED STRANGER WITHIN OUR MIDST
©1981 Marvel Comics Group

"AFTER ***SILVER SURFER #4*** [THE BUSCEMA STYLE] BECAME STILL ANOTHER FOOTNOTE TO THE KIRBY STYLE."

And of course, the Kirby influence was one which John Buscema had to immediately come to terms with when he came to work for Marvel. It's a different process than what happened at DC with Neal Adams. Neal was an indirect influence that people weren't so much told to emulate, he was held up as a shining example. At Marvel, however much lip service Stan would give to the idea of everyone having his own drawing style, there was still, generally speaking, Kirby (or somebody influenced by Kirby—even, say, Steranko, who combined Kirby and Eisner and various influences) who'd be held up as a standard—do your own style, but get this kind of dynamics into it. And anything that goes in that direction tends to make you begin to try and get inside it and see how Jack Kirby thought, or what it was Stan was after. Like John Buscema, at times—not in Stan's presence but outside of it—reacted violently to some of the conversations Stan had with him. For example, a lot of us who were around Marvel back then were very amused at the time ***THE SILVER SURFER #4***, I guess it was—the one with Thor—was reprinted in the Simon and Schuster book. Stan talked about how fantastic it was, and how wonderful it was, and a standard of the field and a light for the ages—having totally forgotten that about ten years before, or so, when John Jahn brought the pencils in—I remember it quite well: a number of us had seen it, and just thought it was beautiful! His pencils on Thor, and his unique vision of Asgard, were even better than they came out in the inks, because John was doing wonderful, fully-rendered pencils then, even beyond the beautiful work he was doing on ***AVENGERS*** and ***SUB-MARINER*** with me. And he was really rising to a real height there, apparently because he was so involved because Stan gave him so little of a plot to work with—and as a result, John was really into the plotting aspect of it then in a way he had not been before and has not been since. And that whole issue was a turn-around for him because he went into Stan's office and Stan said, "Forget what those other people told you, it's all wrong!" and proceeded to spend one hour or so—I didn't realize how long until later—going over it page by page, telling John how everything ***should*** have been. The Asgard (according to Stan) was all wrong because it looked too much like King Arthur's court. I got some of this second-hand from Stan later on, when John came out. I remember that a year later, or more, I was at Gil Kane's apartment and Buscema, Archie Goodwin, Gray Morrow, and I formed a little publishing coalition (for a few weeks there), and something came up about Stan and The Surfer. and John just began to—I won't say rave, because he didn't, and this was after months and months, over a year, and he was talking about the way he felt—the real anger he felt towards Stan for going over that job that way. He felt when he came out of there that his whole confidence in his work [had been undermined], that it had really been a case of overkill. I don't think that to this day, ten years later, from having conversations with John which were somewhat mellower—he really ever forgot the fact that Stan...naturally, I won't say emasculated him, but basically that's what he felt. After that, you'll notice in issues five and six of ***THE SILVER SURFER***, and in other jobs, you'll suddenly see John begin to change, and that's when his total Kirby imitation period began to come in. Like if Stan wanted imitation Kirby, that's what he'd get. And all of John's best work on ***THE AVENGERS***, on ***THE SILVER SURFER*** — despite revitalization on a few books here and there—everything after that was colored by the fact that if Stan didn't like what he'd been doing, and if he was going to treat him that way, he'd totally change his style and forget about his own views. And since that time, John's been—I won't use the term hack artist, because that would denigrate him and not make him seem like the fine artist he is—but he's been totally commercially-aimed, and he's gotten away from the idea of trying to express himself at all. I think he was moving, at that time, toward a different kind of dynamics that would have been a little more of an alternative to Kirby, and Stan just couldn't stand the fact that he was coming in with something that was a little different version of Asgard, even though it would have fit within the framework . I don't think this is a total criticism of Stan. Stan is a very good teacher, and a lot of the things he said might have been valid, but it was a case of overkill. Otherwise there may have been more of an alternative Buscema style

emerging at Marvel in the 1970s, but after ***SILVER SURFER #4***, it became still another footnote to the Kirby style.

CF: Do you think that DC is beginning to develop a house style of its own, or that it has a house style that it is now moving towards?

THOMAS: Well, I have to mention first that I don't pay as much attention to comics as I should, I suppose. I collect everything, I file it, I tape everything, and I read some books, but I'm not a student of the medium—not the way I used to be. For example, I know it's good artwork, but I don't think I could recognize John Byrne['s work] alongside several other artists if Terry Austin inked them all.

CF: Hmm.

THOMAS: But the thing is, looking at the DC artists, I think the same influences are there. There's a certain amount of Kirby influence—much less, because the DC editors in the old days had a resistance to Jack's type of style which probably isn't true now. But by now, they have other influences going. There's a lot of Neal Adams influence still, obviously, which is in many ways good—as long as people aren't influenced by Neal in his attitude toward deadlines. And it does have something of a house style, but I think there's a lot of room in the companies today for a deviation from the house style. And that's the best thing I see. The only problem is that—and people would disagree with me on this—but I think that generally, since the period of the middle 1970s, there have been a decreasing number of really important artists or writers coming into the field. There are a lot of minor flourishes and well-written and well-drawn stories, and all sorts of little flourishes of style and a lot of noodling and detail—and I'm not trying to run anybody down and say we're better or anything like that—but in several ways the field has lost a lot of the vitality that made the period of the late 1960s and the early 1970s one during which a lot more change had come into comics than had come into comics since quite a few years before. After all, that whole period, you had Neal who was sort of a one-man explosion influencing a lot of other people and also being a new standard: "If you want to fit with the new style, by God, better compete with Neal as well as with what Jack Kirby might be doing!" And I think there just haven't been many new directions in art. Even if you think that Kirby's influence started in the middle 1960s again—after lying fallow for some years—Neal came in in the late 1960s! I don't know; there's been no equating figure during the entire 1970s.

But maybe that's typical of the 1970s anyway. I keep remembering the ***DOONESBURY*** cartoon that mentioned, "Here we are, half-way through the 1970s, and the biggest thing they had to offer was the 1950s revival." I feel that's the way the 1970s were, for the most part, despite a lot of good work by various people. There were individual good artists, like Barry Smith. Barry has been somewhat of an influence on people, and after he got rid of his Kirby influences to a great extent, he certainly came close to being an original. But the other people are mostly—you see, you can look at Jack Kirby and not see the influence of other comic book artists on him, and yet you can see his influence in many people. And you'll see it in Neal Adams and you can see some of it in Barry Smith. But I think of John Byrne—not because he's not a good artist, because he is—but I'm looking at his work and, as he himself once said in an interview, that he is an amalgam of Neal Adams and various other artists...

CF: Jack Kirby and Gil Kane.

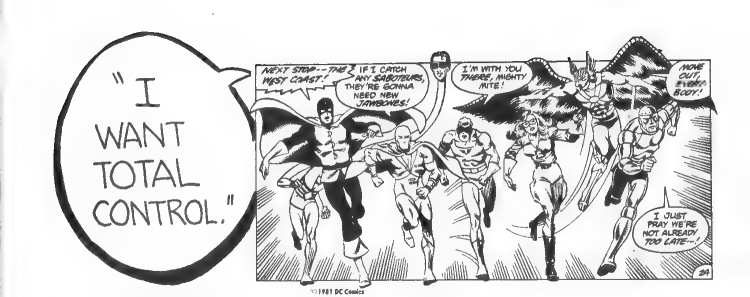
THOMAS: Yeah, and I think that's true, and I think that's the reason why I've never been too impressed by him, even though he's a good artist. I mean, obviously it would be nice to work with a good artist who's a nice amalgam of these things. Starlin is a nice amalgam of things, and so forth, without quite being an original—but in some ways, he is, and the thing is, if you become enough of an amalgam, then you bring your own personality into it, and become an original artist. I mean, Don Heck, who keeps getting denigrated in interviews—he's an original artist. You don't mistake other people's work for his. The question is always whether he develops a fan following or not.

CF: Do you think that those people are just playing it safe by following a commercial slant in their art and their writing, or do you think that people who are currently working are lacking that experimental spark that would allow them to develop their own work?

THOMAS: I think that the companies for the most part are not nurturing that experimental spark. And it's an intangible thing—I don't know how it comes about or how it is nurtured, one way or the other. I don't know whether I was guilty of it when I was editor-in-chief. Yet the experimental spark is not being nurtured for the most part. The things that are being nurtured and experimented with are minor experimentations in style, like having Iron Man become a drunkard or something—which was a good bit, and, as far as I could see, well-handled, well-intentioned...but I think when something like that becomes one of the "major things" over the last few years, there's something wrong, because it shows that you're moving faster and faster and staying in place. Instead of making leaps forward, you're sort of running furiously in place without really getting anywhere. I don't think it has anything to do with the natural inferiority of the average artist. The average artist, in comics, even the **above**-average artist—and writer, too—has never been a terribly experimental or new kind of [craftsman]. Neal Adams in a way is not entirely new, because what he brought in was a kind of draftsmanship of the type that Lou Fine and a lot of other people had done before, but he managed to combine it with a very dynamic feel which was an alternative to Kirby in a lot of ways. Whereas most other people take their dynamics either from Neal or Kirby, as, say,

YOU! WERE ONCE AN AVENGER, METRO... THOUGH IT SHAMES US NOW TO ADMIT THE FACT!
HE'LL BE WORTHY OF ADMISSION TO OUR RANKS AGAIN, VISION...
...WHEN HIS HUMILITY MATCHES THE SPEED OF HIS LIMBS!
EVERY WORD WHICH THEY SPOKE IS A TRUTH WHICH SEARS ME LIKE A BURNING SWORD!
NO MAN WILL DARE MORE THAN THEY TO SAVE BOTH THE EARTH... AND WANDA!
STILL, I AM GALLED BY THIS INACTIVITY... THIS ENDLESS WAITING!
©1981 Marvel Comics Group

"IT WAS MY JOB TO SELL COMIC BOOKS, AND TO SEE THAT OTHER PEOPLE SOLD COMIC BOOKS."


"I WANT TOTAL CONTROL."
NEXT STOP--THE E. & W. COAST!
IF I CATCH ANY SABOTEURS, THEY'RE GONNA NEED NEW JAWBONES!
I'M WITH YOU THERE, MIGHTY MITE!
MOVE OUT, FLABBY BODY!
I JUST PRAY WE'RE NOT ALREADY TOO LATE--
84
©1981 DC Comics

Byrne does,and they go by Gil Kane (which is, again, by way of Kirby), and then they take that and develop it in another way—which is, again, the "noodling" school. I contributed to it enormously, for example, by one of the most important things I did in a commercial way, I think, which was teaming up John Buscema and Alfredo Alcala. Now that was ***not*** a marriage made in heaven as far as artists were concerned, because it does not bring out Alfreda's natural style, which is not the same as John's. And Buscema, of course had no use (nothing personal) for the flourishes of Alfredo, or Ernie Chan, or any of the others that were working over him, noodling to death what he'd put there. What John wanted is closer to what he'd ink himself, without a lot of noodling and detail and so forth. In some ways, I think the kind of thing I think I wanted to see in ***SAVAGE SWORD*** when I first teamed up Buscema and Alcala in ***SAVAGE SWORD #2***, was to try and get the dynamics of a guy like John with the outward flourishes that fans seem to over-value.

CF: You've mentioned before that you think fans particularly tend to get caught up in small stylistic points like the noodling school. Do you think it's part of the editor's job to play *to* that exclusivity or...

THOMAS: Well, I think it both is and it isn't. It was my job to sell comic books, to try to see that other people sold comic books. To the extent that they were going to sell comic books, I would encourage them and try to tell them where I thought they were doing it right or wrong—in light of their supposed aim of trying to sell comic books. In a couple of cases, I would shake my head and eventually, had I not left when I did, there are a couple of writers that would have probably had to go at Marvel, and probably did anyway—simply because they had no interest in selling comic books.

I tried to find a way to satisfy my own artistic sense, and my sense of accomplishing something other than keeping Marvel afloat. At the same time, of course, I had to make sure they were selling enough comics to keep everybody off my back. So I was always experimenting. If somebody came in with a new style (and I think that this is what most editors will try to do) you think you can justify giving a crack to, then you go ahead and do it. There's a natural tendency to play it safe, because you've got a reasonably large investment there, and your job is to protect it. It's not like it's your money you're toying around with and you can bet it all on one roll of the dice.

The only reason there aren't more beheadings, I think, is because [comics is] such a silly little industry. I mean, it may generate millions of dollars, but it's still a kind of rump industry compared to television and movies. And as a result, you can get away with a lot more. The reason I want to stay in comics, even when I'm busy with other things, is that you get a freedom of artistic expression (within certain limits) in comics. Once you know the perimeters, you can work within them and have fun in a way you often can't [writing] movies, and not, generally speaking, [writing] television.

CF: We were wondering how much control you actually desire or expect to have over a particular comics series that you're working on—the way it's developed, the way it's artistically expressed? You often desire to work with specific artists...

THOMAS: I want total control. I'll settle for a lot less—obviously I have. I mean I have Len Wein as an editor on ***ALL-STAR SQUADRON***, and that would work out whether it had been Len or Dick Giordano, I think, or maybe a couple of other people that are there, because it was my concept, and they're giving me a lot of lead with it right now. Now, if the book doesn't sell, or if Len suddenly left and some new editor came in, things would be different. Every particular book is a new deal. I would like to have control over every single thing in the book, including who letters it, who colors it—I had that more or less at Marvel, off and on, although I didn't get into the coloring, because it became too difficult to track everything down.

As a practical fact, for example, on ***ALL-STAR SQUADRON***, Len has given me—not control, that's not his to give. He would be derelict in his responsibilities to DC Comics if he gave me far more control. He has to maintain the right to say yea or nay to every single thing that I do, and I suppose I could try going around him, but that would simply create enormous problems so that one or the other of us would have to leave the book right away, and it would be silly for us to do that. So what Len has done, for example, is just be very supportive by discussing things with me. I don't always agree with his decisions, but they've all been made according to the best information available, and Len's information on a lot of things will be better than mine in some ways. And whether Len was right or wrong, not only did he have the right to make whatever decision, but sooner or later, someone *has* to make a decision—and we ***all*** make mistakes. For example, when I was doing ***THE INVADERS***, I didn't have total control over who I might have used in the book. I had to use one of the handful of people who might have been available, and I chose Frank Robbins—because I admired his art, and thought that if I could get him away from doing rubbery super-heroes, he could really be good. And I was absolutely right, except for one little detail—that I could never get him away from doing the rubbery super-hero figures. And therefore no matter how much story-telling was in the book, how much work he put into it, how great the details were, the fact remained that the main thing—the look of the super-heroes themselves—was not very successful, and the book only sold during the early issues when Vinnie Colletta inked in such a way that it did not look like Frank Robbins. And as soon as he left and a decision was made to have Frank Springer ink it more like Robbins himself, the book plummeted in sales and never recovered. Now that was a mistake on my part—not that I had any control over Vinnie leaving (he was going to become Art Director at DC at the time)—but my mistake was in allowing Frank Springer to ink the book to look that much like Robbins. I should have pushed to get somebody else who

would change Robbins' work the way Vinnie had. Just in terms of basically watering down the Robbins style. The thing is is that it hurt me aesthetically. Despite all the misgivings I had about the cartooniness of Robbins' work, it hurt me to see that work watered down by someone who inked it differently than the way it was penciled. Which is what Vinnie basically did; he noodled it.

CF: A clear case of commercial interests working against the aesthetic decision?

THOMAS: I guess so, but it was just a dumb, stupid mistake. I made that same mistake with Frank Thorne on ***RED SONJA***, even though I liked his work very much. He had more of a following at Marvel than Frank Robbins ever did, but again, there were things about his art...I knew Frank Thorne was a good artist, and I felt that if I could get him away from the baby-doll look of Red Sonja, I felt that we could have a good, successful book. But I think a number of factors combined with what I think is the most important fact—that the heroine didn't look the way she should have. I think that's what contributed to the lack-luster sales of the book. It was a very marginal book, and since Marvel had no merchandising rights in it, and they were cutting the line a little, they figured that that was a book to drop.

The trouble with a color comic book at Marvel or DC is that ***one*** character and that ***one*** artist and that ***one*** writer have to sell that book entirely on their own merits. You don't have anthology books these days where if you don't like one art style, you'll like another art style. I think in the old anthology books, there was usually one character who primarily carried the book. Superman practically carried ***ACTION COMICS***, and you could run anything you wanted in the back-up features and the book would have sold just as well. Minor characters like Green Arrow, Aquaman, and Johnny Quick survived for years after Green Lantern and Flash and Hawkman died, simply because they were back-up features in successful books, even though it didn't make any difference that they were there. The intelligent thing to have done at DC in the late 1940s and early 1950s was to have knocked a couple of characters out of those books, and seen whether Green Lantern and those other characters—who, after all, had their own books—might have brought a few thousand extra readers to ***ACTION*** or ***ADVENTURE.*** But they didn't feel that they needed to experiment, as the books were doing quite well as they were, and they just let the other characters die. It wasn't a particularly rational decision, but it worked out okay. And one can never prove whether putting Green Lantern in the place of Green Arrow would have improved the sale of ***ADVENTURE COMICS.***

CF: How much effect do you feel the artist you're teamed with has on the book you're doing and the direction of the series? This comes to mind specifically because of your involvement with the ***X-MEN*** series, which was radically different under your different artists during your tenure.

THOMAS: Well, I'm affected, as a lot of writers are, tremendously by how the artwork looks. All writers are going to be affected to a certain extent by who they are going to be working with, especially if it's a regular long-time team. They may make accomodations to the artist even if they don't think they do. Some probably make fewer accomodations than I do because they have a bigger viewpoint that makes then think they want to be the ***auteur***, the real author of the work in the strictest sense of the word, and they want to make the strip the same no matter who the artist might be. I've always felt that's not really possible. Therefore, the best thing one can do is to know who the artist is and try to write for that particular artist. Now when I take, for example, the ***ALL-STAR SQUADRON*** book that I've just been talking to Len about, I think that my own approach to the plotting—for the most part—would be identical now no matter who the artist was, but it's a matter of how much I could really consider deliberate. The thing is that every writer is really drawing the thing in his own mind, in his own style, or some style he may see. In my case, when I've been plotting it, I sort of see it the way Rich Buckler would draw it. And when I get it back, of course, it's never going to be the way I saw it. In some ways, it's going to be less than I thought, and in some ways it's going to be more than I thought I would get. You make the accomodation later in the writing.

CF: Do you think that the audience for ***ALL-STAR SQUADRON*** will have any problems relating to something that's ostensibly set forty years in the past?

"I'M TREATING IT AS BEING A SORT OF HISTORICAL GRAPHIC NOVEL."

THOMAS: I think so, yeah. I think they will. It's one of the reasons I was a little reluctant to suggest to DC that that be the way to handle it. Because, after all, even with Captain America, the Torches, and The Sub-Mariner, ***THE INVADERS*** had tough sledding because of that very fact. It's a little easier to accept a war comic (and DC has, of course, been very successful with WWII-era comics, but that's a little different) because you've got a world that they don't recognize: the world of Europe doesn't even look like Europe—they're wandering around in nothing but ruins and villages, and you think of it as almost a different world. When you come into stories that are set in the New York, let alone the London, of the 1940s, you've got a world that's just familiar enough to confuse readers, half of whom aren't going to realize—and this is hard to believe; it's hard for me to believe, even though I know it's true—that a goodly percentage of readers are just not going to realize (unless I keep setting it up for them every page or two) that this is set in the 1940s. They just don't know. There's no reason for a kid, who's five or six years old, or even an average reader who's eleven or twelve, to have any kind of feeling for history. There's no reason why they really should. You're talking about people who just pick up a book to read a super-hero adventure, and suddenly I'm tossing at them what I consider a kind of historical novel. I didn't think that way with ***THE INVADERS***, because I started off in 1942, and I really didn't have much of anything to do with history after that. But my conception for ***ALL-STAR SQUADRON*** was quite different, and I'm really treating it as being a sort of historical graphic novel, where it's done in the format of regular comics.

being around since World War II. All you have to do is figure out that they did all these things in their twenties, so they have to be at least pushing sixty. And here you've got Green Lantern, you've got The Flash, and all these characters who don't have the excuse of Wonder Woman or The Sub-Mariner (who have a slower aging process), and you *have* to come up with a second generation of characters like Power Girl, and The Huntress, and Star-Spangled Kid (in suspended animation), and Robin, and that kind of thing, and it gets very confusing. So I-felt, why don't we try something? I told them that they'd had a lot of success with WWII books, and they'd had a fair amount of success with The Justice Society, so why couldn't they try combining them, and if it didn't work out over the first six months or a year, we could always find a way to change the book over to the present. It would be a noble experiment, and in one issue they could find some things about one case that wouldn't come to fruition for forty years. There'd be a flash-forward, and we wouldn't go back again. But I'm hoping for various reasons that it does work out the way it is, because it is such an interesting experiment to me.

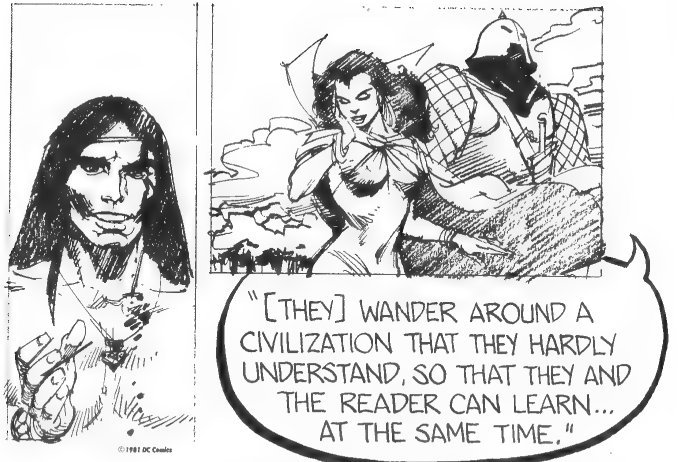
Then, of course, you had the main problem of going along with my old wish, which was to bring in new characters, but they did not want me to be using duplicates of the characters who are in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE***. Because you can't merchandise two different versions of Green Lantern. Because people will throw up their hands in horror—"Which one is Green Lantern, the one in the red shirt or the green?" So I figured, well, we'll keep those in as occasional guest stars. We'll emphasize the ones that don't have two versions, and we'll bring in new characters. Of course, that's a decision that Len, and the people above his head, had the final say, yet they gave me a lot of leeway. We immediately came up with a list, and I said that it sounded great to me, because I wanted to use, say, Johnny Quick—and now we can just write out the Flash, and have him as a guest star, and bring in Johnny Quick (who idolizes the Flash anyway, which is a point I keep playing up). We also needed a real strong character, because most of the groups in recent years have had a muscle man, starting with The Thing, in particular. And so we started looking, and there weren't a lot of those. I mean, the Atom was not a super-powerful guy; there weren't that many unless you get to Superman and these others, so I said, what about Robotman? And Joe Orlando, I think, had been thinking of the same character. And then we began to look for women characters, and that was the hard part, because Wonder Woman, of course, could not be in the series a lot, and there weren't many other good woman characters, except, maybe to a lesser extent, Phantom Lady at Quality. Unfortunately, she duplicated the powers of Dr. Mid-Nite, whom I wanted to use to a great extent. So we found Liberty Belle, who wasn't technically invented until 1943, but whose origin came out of 1939, out of the invasion of Poland and subsequent events in Europe, and so it was very easy to say she had actually been around in 1941 or so, and the story was published a year or so late. So, with very little negating of the things that had been done in the 1940s, we had been able to come up with a fairly good group. And at the same time, we had a lot of other characters who would be coming in and out, and I found even I don't know who we'll be using from issue to issue. And so really, it just evolved slowly, and I began to go back and read over the stories; I made a list hanging over my wall of all the DC/Quality heroes, I asked Paul to keep those from being used much in the nice-but-basically-useless ***"WHATEVER HAPPENED TO?"*** series at DC, because for the sake of one eight-page story, it could screw up my character, forty years in the future. And no matter how good the story would be, it would not be economically productive for DC to allow this to be done, because it would decrease the reader's interest if you know who's going to marry, and who's going to do this and do that. Every time you know something like that, it makes it a little harder to deal with in 1941-42.

So, it's been a mountain of problems, but since I have most of the old comics on microfilm (almost everything DC ever published, in the 1940s, and 1950s, and late 1930s, and Quality as well), I have a lot of reference I can Xerox off for an artist. It turned out to work fairly well. I estimate that I myself have spent the equivalent of two or three work-weeks just doing the research, and just the basic preliminaries of the plotting, and this is one reason why I'm not in

CF: Why was the decision made to set it in the 1940s, then?

THOMAS: (Laughs) I don't know! I went in there in April talking to Janette [Kahn], and Paul [Levitz], and Joe [Orlando]—I had just delivered the signed contracts, and they asked me what was the book I'd most like to do, and I told them that there were three main things that interested me. Number one, I thought I ought to do a sword-and-sorcery comic. It might not work. I didn't have a John Buscema, or Barry Smith, or Gil Kane-level artist to do the book with me, but it seemed to make sense to try and do it, both from my viewpoint and from theirs. The second thing was to do some sort of ***"Justice Society"*** type of book, and the third was to do a re-vamping of Captain Marvel, which I would like to do. I've mentioned many times, and it's true—that Nelson Bridwell does the ***best*** Otto Binder-type ***"Captain Marvel"*** stories since Otto himself was writing them back in the 1940s—but I think that's not an approach that's going to make Captain Marvel a regular big-selling book, because it's just a nostalgic type of thing. And so far, Captain Marvel is not likely to be much more than a merchandising property for DC. It works out very well. Captain Marvel, however, has never sold very many comic books in the 1970s based on that approach, no matter how well you do it—and Nelson does it better than Denny did it, or better than anybody else, probably better than I would. Yet I was tremendously thrilled when they arranged for me to do that ***"Superman/Shazam"*** team-up, the two-parter that I worked on with Gerry and Rich, and eventually with Dick, because—even though it wasn't doing Captain Marvel the way I had envisioned, it gave me a chance to work with the old one, and do some things with it that I would have had fun doing that I thought maybe should have been done.

Getting back to ***ALL-STAR***, which is the main thing, I thought that the simplest thing to do, to avoid getting into the morass of those fifteen or so issues of ***ALL STAR*** in the late 1970s, would be to think about the real origins of the characters: These characters all came out of that period around the beginning of WWII, and they had their natural being there, and that was when they were young, inspired characters at their ***very best***. The thing is that nowadays, you have a real problem with that book, no matter how well it's handled, that you have all these heroes who have to be about sixty years old. Kids may not think about World War II, but there's got to be something that's getting to them a little more every year about the heroes


"[THEY] WANDER AROUND A CIVILIZATION THAT THEY HARDLY UNDERSTAND, SO THAT THEY AND THE READER CAN LEARN... AT THE SAME TIME."
©1981 DC Comics

great shape on my comics work (Laughs); it's because between the sword-and-sorcery book and the ***ALL-STAR SQUADRON***, I've spent too much time in preliminary research, probably. All I did was what I generally say comics people can't afford to do, which was turn it into a hobby a little bit.

CF: Um, speaking of the sword-and-sorcery character, Arak, can you tell us something more about the background of the character? We understand he's an American Indian in Europe?

THOMAS: Yeah. The basic idea is that I wanted to do a sword-and-sorcery book, but I didn't want to do a book that was ***CONAN*** with another name. Nor did I want to go in the direction of ***CLAW***, or the Elric kind of magic sword idea. I basically wanted to figure out some way to do what I liked about Conan—which was just your basic strong and savage hero, wandering around in an alien, ancient, medieval-type civilization. And to the extent that anything I do like that would be imitating Conan, yes, well, so be it. I don't really mind, I'm not trying to make anything different just for the sake of making it different—because I liked writing ***CONAN*** and I would still be writing ***CONAN*** if things had worked out a little differently. So I decided that the thing I would like to do was, rather than create one of these worlds where every time you walk around the corner you run into a new monster or god or something, to make an attempt to deal with a world that seems real. I think that was one of the accomplishments of the ***CONAN*** comic, partially because of the very, very strong Howard model. I don't take credit for it; I was merely an interpreter, not a creator. So I had decided that the thing I liked about doing ***CONAN***, and the thing that made me stick around and do five thousand pages (and be content to do five thousand more), was the fact that there ***was*** this world, and I didn't feel I was constantly having to add some silly little thing every time, and go on my own.

There are two ways to create a world: you either create the world in advance, and know its perimeters and then you start going into detail, or else you take an already-created world like I had with the Hyborian Age, and you can have a lot of fun with that. I began to think that one of the things I would like to do would be to go back to the period, Howard's early work, which was before Conan and before Kull. He was dealing with the real world, but it was a real world in which magic worked. I'm thinking of the Bran Mak Morn stories, the Solomon Kane, the Cormac Mac Art. They took place in different times. So I think of this new series, essentially, as taking place on some other earth; whether it's Earth-Two, or Earth-Thirty-Seven, I'm not exactly sure, but it is not to me the same Earth-One as the super-heroes. Certainly it's not ***our*** Earth—that's the most important thing. It's a parallel world in which magic works, but otherwise is fairly similar to our earth history. So, after much thought, I finally decided that around 800 AD (actually, the series starts a few years before that) would be the best period. This is the period of Charlemagne in Europe. In some ways, it's one of the last periods you can still have that "Dark Ages" type of feel, and at the same time, I wanted to have a few civilizations there. Europe was so much more foresty and less civilized in the Dark Ages, as we call them, than, say Howard's Hyborian Age, where there were cities all over the place, on every continent. So there were a few problems I had in getting enough cities for Arak to be wandering around in. But I figured, if we've got Charlemagne's time, we have Charlemagne—who was reasonably civilized— and Byzantium. Of course, we also have the relatively new Moslem civilization; Bagdad was only fifty-to-a-hundred-years-old at the time, and also, I could use the Vikings. I didn't want to do a straight Viking, and I didn't want to do a Teuton, being of Germanic descent, and I wasn't happy with that because it's been done so much—"***THE VIKING PRINCE,***" which was not a sword-and-sorcery comic most of the time, yet which veered toward it near the end. The idea of a Viking involved in that kind of adventure was not that original to me, and not that satisfying. And then it suddenly occurred to me that it would be interesting to have an American Indian hero, because how much closer

can you get to what I liked about the idea of Conan being an outsider—being an observer. And not just Conan, but all the good sword-and-sorcery characters, like Michael Moorcock's Elric, they're all people who come from some foreign place, and wander around a civilization that they hardly understand, so that they and the reader can learn about these civilizations at the same time. And therefore, you're tempted to identify with the outsider because things seem pretty weird to you, too. So I figure if you've got an American Indian, anything would seem odd to him, and he would seem odd to everyone else. By a strange coincidence, which was not planned, the fact that he is a "redskin" means that even his coloring will be different from the other people, closer to what Conan was. (But with Conan, it's a sheer coincidence, because he's supposed to be bronze, but we could never really make him look bronze.) I'm hoping Arak will be colored that way also. So that was really the genesis of the thing, and Joe Orlando became the biggest champion of it. He saw at once what I had in mind, because he likes to do reading in that area, and we had an enjoyable time discussing it, and he was very supportive. Originally, Len was going to be the editor of that book, and Dick of ***ALL-STAR SQUADRON***, but I suggested they might be turned around, because Len was more familiar with the super-heroes (so that his input would probably be a little more valuable there), while Dick, while he could obviously do the super-heroes, in some ways had been working on sword-and-sorcery to a greater extent than Len had. After all, Dick's still technically drawing a "***RED SONJA***" story I assigned him over a year ago (Laughs), and will probably be published by Marvel, some day. But at any rate, I figured Dick would understand that, and so it just seemed more convenient for Dick to be the editor of the one, and Len the other, and they both agreed, and so it's just been one of those things where basically things have fallen in pretty happily.

Then came the artist. Again, I knew it was difficult to get just the right person, I mean, we almost kicked Barry Smith off the ***CONAN*** book after the first issue, because it was so far below what he had done on the sample pages. By the time the second issue came in, it began to shape up, and within two or three more issues, we were convinced that we had definitely made the right choice. Of course, the book didn't sell worth a damn (Laughs), but eventually it sold okay. In this case, I knew I wasn't going to have the John Buscema-type of artist I would have liked to work with at DC. It would have made sense to have someone along the Neal Adams/Mike Grell line. DC had the one reasonably successful book, ***WARLORD***, which a few years ago, I believe, was one of their poorest-selling titles, but with the rise of the comic book store and the direct sales market, has risen to a very solid title. Even though ***WARLORD*** is not exactly sword-and-sorcery... I mean, there are aspects that are and aspects that go back to earlier models, and things I would never do in a sword-and-sorcery book; still, in essence, it's the only other book that's been close to that—that's been successful, at any rate. And, while it's hard to find the right artist to compete, because Mike Grell—while he's a derivative artist in terms of his artistic influences (it's almost pure Neal Adams), the fact remains that Mike, in his own stories, puts the stuff together very well, to the point where you almost forget about it being derivative any more, because his stories are derivative of so many things; it's Burroughs, and Howard, and Moorcock, and Larry Niven, and everything. And this is even the book in which the character is going to be introduced.

CF: In one of the inserts.

THOMAS: Right, and I had suggested Ernie Colón as the usual artist, because I was so impressed with several stories by him (which haven't come out yet) of Conan, and because he had an individual style. So I suggested Ernie, and there was various resistance. Gene Day was also a possibility at one stage, and other people, and suddenly, someone came up with the idea, "Hey, what about Ernie Colón?" After it had gone around, and about the third time it came up, and they somehow changed Rich Buckler, who was going to do the book, over to ***ALL-STAR***, I was informed after the fact—and it was fine with me—that Colón was to become the penciller, and I figured that, as a realistic inker, like Tony DeZuniga, it would work out well. And Tony had expressed an interest in leaving Marvel; he figured he'd like to work with me on something else. And so it comes

out very well. I'm hoping it will be a good-looking book, and I know that Ernie has put in a lot of work on it. We had him redraw so many things in that fifteen-page story. He was redrawing some of the main figures two or three times, and it will still take several issues for us to see how it's going to shape up. It's not as cut-and-dried a thing in a lot of ways as the ***ALL-STAR*** thing.

CF: It sounds almost like the Frank Robbins-Vince Colletta pairing again: I've seen Ernie Colón's work with his own inking, and it's very linear, and almost delicate in its own way. And Tony DeZuniga's style is very opposed to that.

THOMAS: In a lot of ways you're right, a little like the Buscema-Alcala thing, or maybe the Robbins-Colletta thing is a little closer, except that Tony is more of a penciller than Vinnie is, and therefore can shape the pencilling even more than Vinnie can. Vinnie can simplify things, and get them down to their essences. It's close to what you said, but Tony is also a decorator. Really, in the sense of the word, an embellisher.

There's even more to know, and less for me to know in advance about the medieval world, and I would like it to go out in a fairly real situation, in certain ways.

Our theory was whatever happened in the medieval world in legend, maybe could have really happened in this world. And therefore, that means that there really could have been unicorns, and there really could be demons prowling the earth, anything you could think of that might have been a Dark Ages-type superstition might pop up in this book.

CF: When that concept was first described to us, we immediately thought of the way the ***PRINCE VALIANT*** series was treated in its early years.

THOMAS: Well, there are a lot of similarities. I don't think it's closer to ***PRINCE VALIANT***, but there is a lot of Hal Foster's philosophy of ***PRINCE VALIANT***, in which he took several hundred years of history

and compressed them into the life of Prince Valiant.

CF: Uh-huh. And took all the elements of the Arthurian romance and also threw it into the series. In your case, you're taking the Charlemagne romances.

THOMAS: Generally, it works out very well. What I'm trying to do in the book is combine the historical Charlemagne, with the elements of Bulfinch's mythology. Which is difficult in places, because whole countries are made up, there are almost no characters that repeat, except Charlemagne himself and the Roland—also called Orlando—character. And the Roland/Orlando character would be dead ten or twenty years by the time this series starts anyway. And yet, in the legend of Charlemagne I'm using, there is an Orlando, so, I guess I'll treat him as the son of the original Roland/Orlando. I figure there's no way to combine the legends and the historical fact, except by playing fast and loose with it, and I don't consider myself bound by anything. But on the other hand, I'm going to use it all for inspiration.

But you're right—Charlemagne equals King Arthur in some ways, and in some ways, Prince Valiant is my particular character. Conan is a little like that too, in some ways. Howard did the same things with his mythical Hyborian Age: He took the best of what he wanted from two thousand years of culture, and threw them all together in the same world. That's what Foster did just a few years later; he started doing ***PRINCE VALIANT*** only about a year after Howard died. And of course, I'm doing the same thing here. But mine is somewhere uneasily between the two—the difference being, Prince Valiant went to visit the Indians; here the Indians come to visit Prince Valiant.

CF: In terms of actual organization, is the actual physical reality of your medieval Europe actually going to be based on the real geographic situation of Europe? Or are you going to put points of land in different places?

THOMAS: If you saw a map of this world, it would be exactly the same as a map of medieval Europe. Of course, that was always in a state of flux, so you have to define exactly what period you're talking about. I'm going to try and keep it pretty close to the period around 800 A.D. That's going to hamper me on the one hand, but on the other, of course, simply by being a model, it gives you a direction. Otherwise, there is this temptation which people do tend to give in to, in certain adventure comics, where you round the corner and there's yet another city—which would be hard to do in this book, because there aren't that many cities in western Europe, even Charlemagne didn't have a court until he built the wall at Chappelle (which I'm hoping to see on my honeymoon—either in May or September, depending on when I take it—by going to Europe, and I want to go a little bit into Germany to where this all technically is now—to see that, to see his throne there). Until that time, he didn't have a regular, you might say, Camelot. But of course, there's also Rome, which was reduced to a very small place then, there's also the catacombs, and its tradition, and all the various things. It's going to be a very difficult book, and I don't know if it will be commercially successful... but the basic thing is this: I've been in the comics field for sixteen years, I've had a reasonable amount of commercial and critical success. (These last few years I haven't worried about either of those, because ***CONAN*** was selling so well I didn't have to worry about it, and I gave up the whole idea of critical success because I either disliked or was so lukewarm to about 80% of what fans go wild over these days.) So, while I could easily just into that—I could be very commercial as an editor guiding a company again—as a writer, I don't want to, because then I'm just pandering to the desires of my readers. That's a perfectly legitimate thing for what basically is a hack writer (or hack artist) situation in comics, to a certain extent, but I don't really want to do that. I want to try a few things, and if those two or three things fail, then I'll go back to some commercial models and just write comics out of my consciousness as something which I don't particularly have anything to contribute to any more—except just competent writing, and in the same old models. But as I say, I'm a traditionalist in certain ways anyway. I just thought it would be kind of interesting to see if I could get away with things I personally wanted to do. And I have not exactly ***deliberately*** chosen the hard path, in setting them in places like WWII, and a realistic Europe, which, to a certain extent, hampers what I can do. At the same time, I feel that I've given myself kind of a challenge, and it's something that interests me in comics in a way that, except in certain aspects of ***CONAN***, I haven't been interested in comics since I left the editor-in-chief job at Marvel in 1974.

CF: Kind of like re-joining the leading edge of the experimental writers in comics?

THOMAS: Well, if there is one. I don't see it, as we were discussing before. There's so little experimentation. There are a lot of minor flourishes, and I see a lot of different kinds of plots, here and there, but I don't see anything that's major. For example, the most successful book in recent years has been the ***X-MEN***, I guess. And I'm guessing because I don't read every issue. But at least, I sort of skim over it, and I'm sort of aware what's going on, but there's nothing in there that is very radical or new. Chris Claremont has been writing it and he's got his own particular interests (in the women characters). And he's got a lot of nice character bits, which are simply just the next expansion of what I was doing, or what Stan was doing and so forth. I'm not trying to take anything away from Chris, but it's just not something that's so wildly original. It's the over-all effect of the characters, the inter-relationships, the writing, the artwork by John Byrne, which is also, not so wildly original, but very, very good, and somehow, that book has come out as something which the whole is better than the sum of its parts. At least, that's my opinion of it.

CF: I had mentioned this to Steve Englehart before, and although he too, had been reading the book, he was under the opinion that if that book had existed at its present level in 1974, it would certainly not be anything spectacular.

THOMAS: He's absolutely right! I'm always glad to agree with Steve, considering I respect his writing so much, and he's absolutely right. It relates to what I was saying before: there's been so little movement in comics, once the Neal Adams period (under Carmine as pub-

lisher) sort of evaporated, and once the initial Marvel impetus had been spent, there have been very few new books of any kind that came out that have even survived for thirty or forty issues. I think that may be kind of a cut-off point, but a lot of them don't seem to make it anymore. And if the ***NEW X-MEN*** had come out then, it would probably have been considered a good book, but it would not have been a stand-out success, I don't think, judged against the better books that Steve was writing, or I was writing, and that other artists were drawing, and other things. I think that's absolutely right.

It's really the case of ***"In the country of the blind, the one-eyed man is king."*** And it's not that ***X-MEN*** wouldn't be a good book in that period, it would not be very special in the era when the creative impulse had ***NEW GODS***, and ***"DEADMAN,"*** or the better of the Lee-Kirby things, or I think the better things that Steve Englehart was doing, the initial few issues of ***HOWARD THE DUCK***. It's interesting, because it's this old book that's been around fifteen, sixteen, seven-

HE'S TOYING WITH US! WHAT KIND OF AN ACE HAS HE GOT UP HIS SLEEVE?
EVERYONE OUTSHOOT ON THE DOUBLE!! NIGHTCRAWLER SCOUT AHEAD!
BAM!
ON MY WAY, CYCLOPE
HEY!
© 1977 Marvel Comics Group

"...I FEEL [THE NEW X-MEN] HAS BEEN OVER-RATED BECAUSE IT EXISTS IN A VACUUM AND NOT MUCH NEW HAS COME ALONG."

teen years, and yet, it's become such a phenomenon—and I can't argue with that kind of thing, because I've always been a commercial writer, or editor, at least, aiming to be, and therefore, anything that sells more comic books than something else, without violating my own particular tastes, or pandering to the audience, has to be applauded. It's only that I feel it's been over-rated because it exists in kind of a vacuum, and not much new has come along.

It's funny, because it's a whole different market from relatively a few years ago. There's such a different audience, you've got more of a hard-core audience that goes to the fan stores. I'm very pleased about the growth of the comics store, because I tried to convince the people at Marvel that this was the wave of the future, although I didn't know to what extent it was. It's my opinion also that DC is likely to go that way in the future, because I think that the people who follow Sol Harrison at DC are more likely to be thinking of comics stores, as oppposed to newsstands. It's difficult, 'cause guys like Martin Goodman (publisher of Marvel Comics until a few years ago) were always worried about offending the newsdealers, the retailers, the wholesalers, and so forth. And nowadays, we can't afford to worry about that any more because there's been such a terrible newsstand crunch on all magazines, that they've got to do something else.

CF: One thing we're kind of concerned about, as long-time readers heading into our dotage...

THOMAS: You run a comics store too?

CF: We've been involved with them. I was managing one up here in Boston for three years. One thing I've always worried about is that the people who actually frequent comic book stores are ***fans***, those people who have already been introduced to comics. And as comics disappear more and more from the newsstands, I'm wondering where the new generation is going to come from.

THOMAS: Obviously, you can say people are going to come into the comics stores, because they'll attract people, and people will bring them in, or people will just wander in on their own.

But I know what you mean, because I discovered comics at the age of four, my mother tells me, by seeing these brightly-colored pictures on the covers, on a stand in a drug store which is still standing and which still sells some comics. So I have the same misgivings. The problem is you're becoming dependent upon what could be a limited market. It could really be like the snake swallowing its own tail. I don't know if there's room left for anything to happen. I'm hoping it won't be that way. We used to have a thing when I was in a Youth League organization, back there when I was a teen-ager; they had this plan, "Each one reach one." They used that expression. The idea was everybody go out and get one person to join, who wasn't coming to these things. In many ways, that's maybe what the companies ought to be promoting. Saying, "If you like comics, and want to see them prosper, make it your business to do a little proselytizing, get someone new every month to buy a couple of comics." It sounds funny, but the thing is, it could actually happen. I am convinced that there is a much bigger market for comics than they have been able to tap. People have been making a lot out of the fact that the youth market is kind of going, but it doesn't make any difference in actual terms. It's only relative, because there are still plenty of young readers to support the comics industry. You could hide behind the fact that there are slightly fewer young people, but the fact remains that half the comics ***aren't*** reaching the ones who are out there ***anyway***. And there are obviously ***millions*** of kids, and a goodly percentage of them are potential comics readers ***if*** you can reach them the right way. So as long as you can only reach a small number of people, and only sell thirty or forty per cent of your comics, it's really a marketing problem more than anything else. The market is still there, you just have to figure out a way to reach it. But I share your misgivings about what could potentially happen if this thing becomes much more incestuous. .

CF: This is also one of the other objections we've been having to the comics aimed specifically at fans—and this has been with some exceptions (your comics have generally been among them)—that they don't seem to project any amount of caring whether the reader can latch onto the story at all. If it's been in progress for several issues, then there are ways, and you and I both know them, to bring the reader up to date fairly painlessly about what the plot is, and who the main characters are.

THOMAS: Were you saying that the books I do are aimed more at fans or are not?

CF: Actually, I'd put your stuff, and Archie Goodwin's, and a few other people in that watershed area, between that time when comics were supposed to be individual entities read an issue at a time interchangeably, and the, let's say, present "serializations" style of comics.

THOMAS: Yeah, I see. Well, it's true, that's exactly where I would like to be as long as there's a market. I feel there has been an overemphasis, at DC in particular, on the individual story in the individual issue. It's DC, for example, that made a big point, I don't say they're wrong to do this, out of the year's best stories. And it's always very nice to be singled out for those, I was very pleased when the Alley group was around, and I'd have a story nominated about

every year, and win one year, and whatever, but I was always interested much more in my career as a writer in general, and as a series writer. Now this is the reason, for example, I knew there wasn't a long-term market for a magazine like ***UNKNOWN WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION***, because every issue was a new adventure. That's why in recent years, the books with characters have come back, and the mystery books have and the things that don't have regular continuing characters, are having a hard time, and they're now considering putting major series in ***HOUSE OF MYSTERY*** and these various books. They're doing it already. And there will probably be more in the future. I've written a letter to Cary Burkett, explaining that I would love to do a **"*Dr. Fate*"** series. I wouldn't mind doing **"*The Spectre*,"** if I didn't have to cut up people with buzz-saws (Laughs). I personally do try to steer that middle ground. I like every issue to be a good story, and I like people to get into it and follow it, but at the same time, I'm not really interested in turning out a perfect seventeen, or five, or twenty-five page story so much as I am trying to keep a series going.

CF: Well, there are some specific examples, like **"*The War of the Tarim*"** in ***CONAN***, and to a lesser extent, I would say, this is just an opinion, the **"*Eternals*"** serial in ***THOR***. Almost all of those issues were individual stories.

THOMAS: You have to try to do that, because you know there are always a certain number of people who missed the last issue.

CF: Or who started reading with that issue.

THOMAS: It's true. There is a danger in anything that requires you to have read anything before. When I was a kid, it was very easy—you pick up an issue of ***SUPERMAN*** or ***BATMAN***, and you didn't ever have to read ***BATMAN*** before to know what was going on. You picked it up, and it might be years before you found out about his origin. (I didn't know until recent years that Plastic Man had been a crook.) They didn't use that. It wasn't important. Now, of course, the characters are constantly harking back to their origins. You get the idea it's like one great continuity, and it's a tremendous amount of fun, but you have to be very careful you don't get carried away. How are you going to do a series set on Earth-Two and explain that this is a ***different*** Superman or Green Lantern? Which is why it's best we de-emphasize those characters, because when a kid picks up a copy of ***ALL-STAR SQUADRON***, he's gonna see a Robotman and Johnny Quick, and Liberty Belle. It's one of these reasons we thought it was best not to play up Plastic Man so much as I originally did, and the only exception I made was—I told Joe Orlando I just wanted one concession—that I wanted to use Hawkman and the Atom. But because Hawkman looks very close to the current version, you don't have a marketing problem, and The Atom is totally different. Those are my two favorites: Hawkman, because I always loved that costume, and the way he flew, and that mask (as a matter of fact, I repencilled most of the masks to some extent in Rich's early issues, to get closer to a 1956-57 Joe Kubert version, which looked better to me); and The Atom, maybe because he was short and went around hitting people, I don't know. (Laughs) And I think it was that ***full*** blue mask, which I even liked on Spider-Man, on that early version of The Atom.

CF: It gives it a hooded effect.

THOMAS: Yeah, and I loved that, and I said maybe I'll eventually write them out, but I had to feel that I could use those two characters. Hawkman will, of course, be the chairman of the thing, just like before in The JSA. Otherwise I agree—we should definitely try and emphasize other characters. We all have favorites; Rich particularly likes Green Lantern, so we may guest-star him a little more than others, and there will be stories that grow out of Wonder Woman's individual comics, because they had so many stories to use as springboards. But in the long run, the real success of the book will depend on, as I see it, whether or not we can make stars out of Johnny Quick, Robotman, Liberty Belle, and the Shining Knight (who's in there too), Phantom Lady, the new female character, Firebrand, who is the sister of the Firebrand character from Quality—and I want to bring in Doll Man later (who is closer to the new Atom), and that kind of thing. It's just a difficult task we've set ourselves here, but we're hoping people can get into it. It's not as easy as getting into ***TEEN TITANS***. Or ***THE X-MEN*** in a lot of ways, and maybe I should have done it in a different way, but after fifteen years, I just had a desire to do something that's quite different from anything I've done before. It has a different feel from what ***THE INVADERS*** had, even. I didn't want it to be just a war comic, I wanted it to be a period piece. I deliberately avoided having #1 be a war story even though it deals with Pearl Harbor, and I didn't have the enemies be the Japanese or the Nazis, primarily. I had the enemies be some time-traveling villains, and I was able to use Degaton, and Solomon Grundy, and the like, some of whom have appeared in recent comics, anyway, and bring them in, even though they didn't exist at that time, by making them time travelers. I'd like to think of ***ALL-STAR SQUADRON*** as being a period piece which is set in a war, but is not going to be war comics. After all, it's not going to be very exciting to see Robotman smashing a Japanese plane. You can do that once or twice, but you can't make hay out of it in the long run. So I'm mostly going to keep them on the home front as opposed to fighting in Europe and Asia.

"...THERE WILL BE STORIES THAT GROW OUT OF WONDER WOMAN'S INDIVIDUAL COMICS."
HELP STAMP OUT P.L.I.O!
FIN
I REALLY FEEL STRANGE ABOUT THIS, BOYS—EVEN THOUGH WE WERE ONLY RACING FOR CHARITY.
©1981 DC Comics

CF: Do you think you're going to run into any particular difficulties finding plot springboards that your audience will already be familiar with?

THOMAS: Yes, I think I will. That's why I decided to start with Pearl Harbor. Originally I was going to start a little later, at the battle of Midway. Or even start it in 1943, and even have it vaguely somewhere between Pearl Harbor and D-Day. Then I decided upon the historical novel approach, and I decided about the one event, along with the atomic bomb, that everyone would know something about, and that's an exaggeration, would be Pearl Harbor. There are so many references, I think everyone will have heard something about Pearl Harbor, to a great extent. Even if they don't know when it was, or where it was, or whatever. But it made the best point I could think of. So rather than start after Pearl Harbor, as I did in ***THE INVADERS***, I start ***with*** Pearl Harbor to take care of things. Then, of course, I have problems, like why is it that with the fighting going on in the Phillippines, and elsewhere, for a period of two or three months, until, I think, late April or early May, why is it that the super-heroes didn't go over and clobber the hell out of the Japanese? Or the Nazis, for that matter? And anyway, I'm in the throes of coming out with an explanation now, but it's interesting; I started off to plot one kind of story for ***ALL-STAR #4***, and ended up totally postponing it to deal

WHILE, HITTHEM THE VERSEL...
YOUR EARTH-BORN AVENGERS REMOVE UNDERGROUND LITTLE OF THIS, DO THEY, PARKER...?
BUT YOU'RE THE MIGHTIEST WARRIOR OF THE KORBE GALAXY...
I AM SURE THE PRICE WILL BE ENOUGH TO FALL INTO PLACE.
BEFORE LONG, EVEN THE BRAVEST KNIGHTS ASSEMBLE TO DO WHAT IS IN STORE FOR THEM...
BUT EVEN A MIGHTY ART CANNOT DELAY THE DESCENDING BOOT!!
THIS CHAPTER PENCILED BY JOHN BUSCEMA
© 1983 Marvel Comics Group

"I'VE ALWAYS HAD THIS AFFINITY FOR WAR."

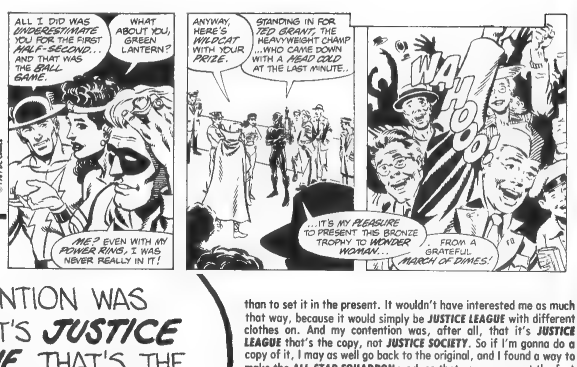
with this problem for a whole issue. So I just did a story in which the Justice Society is virtually totally kidnapped by various super-villains who have been brought back in time by a villain who wants to conquer earth by conquering it in WWII. 'Course, it's a Kang the Conqueror-type of thing, but Kang was based on things like the Legion of Time and those kind of tales. I like to fool around with time paradox, I like to take a lot of liberties with it.

The other thing I've always had a strange affinity for (I've never served in the forces) is war. I'm not saying that I'm a warmonger or anything like that, but I'm saying that **"The War of the Terins"** in ***CONAN*** is something that seems to be reasonably well-remembered (possibly because Barry was doing so well at that time, and Buscema came in, and so forth) and so is the **"*Skrull-Kree War,*"** which I did with Neal Adams (which—I don't fool myself—I know one of the reasons why it's really remembered is because, except for the climax which he didn't deliver, Neal did the artwork, and added a lot of things). But at the same time, it grew out of the fact that I wanted to do the Skrull and Kree war. If there are these two intergalactic races, why shouldn't they be fighting for the earth. I was influenced, I guess, by things like ***THIS ISLAND EARTH*** which has been one of the books I most liked as a young reader in the Science Fiction Book Club. For some reason, I've always had this affinity for war which is enmeshed in my writing. I don't want to fight in a war; I don't like the idea of war at all, but, since they're going to exist, I think one has to deal with it from time to time, and I do have a lot of good ideas in that regard. I don't know, my favorite work of literature is ***THE ILIAD***, so I've always had that interest in war. I like to play chess, which is a war game. My more liberal friends would say I'm a warmonger anyway, because I hate what's happened to this country in the last ten years. And so maybe the time is ripe for this kind of book. Even though I'm not trying to drive the United States into a war by any means. If someone had told me a year or two ago that I would have voted for Ronald Reagan for President, and asked me to be not at all dissatisfied with the way things have gone since then, I would have thought they were out of their mind. But it became so clear to me that while meaning very well, Carter—to me—was wrong on almost every thing that had to do with the survival of the United States—which I think at any stage could be in serious question (which a lot of people don't want to face up to). I think that maybe the world is coming around a little more to the way that I've always felt. It was always hard for me to get behind the youth movement, even though I admired those people, because I disagreed with almost everything they were doing. Not that I didn't care about Viet Nam, I cared about the United States. I cared very, very passionately about it, and that's been out of favor for some years. It was kind of a problem. A lot of people like Stan could put it on and take it off. They could have communist villains, and they could suddenly be doing the opposite story. I'm not that flexible. There are certain kinds of stories which, if they suddenly came into vogue, I would resist tremendously because I just could not adjust to... there are certain kinds of stories that would be almost anti-American, anti-*my* idea of American, that I would have so much trouble doing them, I would probably want to leave the comics field, before I would do them.

CF: Do you have any examples of anything like that, or specifics?

THOMAS: No, I'm really thinking more in terms of a general tone, I suppose, than particular stories. They don't come out a lot in my work, but I have very strong political beliefs. I never worried about doing them in comics, because comics, generally speaking, were so what some people would call "rightist," in the sense of supporting the government policy, and not doing any questioning, and so forth, that there wasn't an account of it until suddenly in the early 1970s—the Watergate spirit and so forth—it suddenly became "in" to be down on anything that your government was doing. And hell, we all know that governments are lousy, and that politicians can be real crud-heads. We know all these things, and yet the fact remains, when you really think about what the alternatives are, it becomes not quite as cut and dried. It's easy to say we shouldn't support a South or Central American regime that tortures its prisoners. The only thing is: What's the alternative? If you don't support the one, you're going to wind up with the leftist regime, which is going to torture prisoners, too. So that I think a lot of well-intentioned views, such as Carter had, really did not serve America's best purposes. I admire the integrity of a man who cancelled the neutron bomb, and I despised him and voted against him largely because of it, ***because*** of things like cancelling the B1 bomber, and the neutron bomb. Because I think there's only one way to avoid a war, and that's to be so damn strong that nobody messes around with you. It's been shown over and over again, and all the other stuff about extending the hand of friendship and so forth is just bullshit to me. I mean, you can ***do*** that, but you've got to have something in the other hand.

I like to study WWII, I suppose, because the period right before that (the middle late 1930s, and even into the early 1940s) so well illustrates my point, and while we thought we'd learned a lesson for a while, most of the people who are alive now weren't even alive at that time. They have no memory of that kind of thing. I don't have any conscious memory of the pre-World War II period, or even of WWII, for that matter. It's just my interest in history, I suppose. I was a history major in college, and even though I never ended up teaching it, I was always interested in it. And I suppose I got interested in it by reading comics which were only five to ten years old when I was growing up. I'd run across them here and there, and I would suddenly run across an element of WWII. I'm not really terribly interested in doing war comics, ***per se.*** Actually, I suppose if I could have my druthers, I'd rather do ***ALL STAR COMICS*** and set it in 1947,


ALL I DID WAS UNDERESTIMATE YOU FOR THE FIRST HALF-SECOND... AND THAT WAS THE BALL GAME.
WHAT ABOUT YOU, GREEN LANTERN?
ME? EVEN WITH MY POWER RING, I WAS NEVER REALLY IN IT!
ANYWAY, HERE'S WILDCAT WITH YOUR PRIZE.
STANDING IN FOR TED GRANT, THE HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMP ...WHO CAME DOWN WITH A HEAD COLD AT THE LAST MINUTE...
...IT'S MY PLEASURE TO PRESENT THIS BRONZE TROPHY TO WONDER WOMAN...
FROM A GRATEFUL 'MARCH OF DIMES'
WAHOO!
© 1981 DC Comics

"MY CONTENTION WAS THAT IT'S ***JUSTICE LEAGUE*** THAT'S THE COPY, NOT ***JUSTICE SOCIETY.***"

but I know there's no market for that. And the thing about a war is, it clarifies thing—it gets things into a certain ferment. You ***know*** that there is this struggle going on.

CF: There was a very odd survey that was in one of the national magazines a few weeks ago, about the war that most Americans remembered, and due to the population shift, it turned out it was ***STAR WARS.***

THOMAS: STAR WARS? (Chuckles)

CF: Yeah.

THOMAS: Well, I suppose that's true. Which has a hell of a lot in common with WWII anyway, but the people who are seeing it don't even know it. Of course, it's a combination of WWII and everything else, including the Romans, by way of Isaac Asimov's "***Foundation Trilogy,***" that and a thousand other elements.

CF: THE NEW GODS?

THOMAS: Yeah, even though it didn't seem influential, I suppose that would probably be true. I'm certainly not misled into believing that there is any great desire on the part of the readers, old or young, for a WWII comic book. But the preview issue of ***SQUADRON*** has fourteen pages, and there isn't a single war scene in it, it takes place on December 6, 1941, which is when ***I*** really started; I started the day before. Issue #1 takes place the morning of December 7, and it does have Pearl Harbor in it. I'm trying not to be too inaccurate, yet of course, I'm not the artist, too. I can't expect Rich to have everything exactly right, to do research on every single point, but I'm going to try to give a feeling for WWII as I go along, because that's the background—the war becomes the whole ***milieu*** of the thing, even though it's not being fought, and even though at the same time, you can have lots of little adventures that have nothing to do with war. After all, the movie version of ***MALTESE FALCON*** was set while the war was raging in Europe, and there's no mention of it at all. It might have just been set in its natural period of the 1920s, as opposed to the 1940s. I would really rather see ***ALL-STAR*** start off this particular way, and then go down, and have to fix it up later, than to set it in the present. It wouldn't have interested me as much that way, because it would simply be ***JUSTICE LEAGUE*** with different clothes on. And my contention was, after all, that it's ***JUSTICE LEAGUE*** that's the copy, not ***JUSTICE SOCIETY***. So if I'm gonna do a copy of it, I may as well go back to the original, and I found a way to make the ***ALL-STAR SQUADRON*** work so that you can accept the fact that there is very little in it to negate the old comics—and that's assuming anyone will remember them. If I'm going to do them, I may as well do them accurately. There's a quiet feeling of some accomplishment, just a nice feeling I get for myself, when I feel I've done something that worked out reasonably well. I may get nine letters out of ten against it, but it doesn't make any difference. I'll feel that there are things that didn't work out the way I wanted them to, it's my fault, or other people's fault, or whatever, the fact remains that to me, I don't really care that anyone else likes it or not, except to the extent that I have to care. Otherwise, if I could be assured of selling enough copies to be employed, I would keep writing it, even if I was the only person reading it. Obviously, I'm too sane to go on doing it. I would make whatever adjustments needed to be made: more war; less war; the book gets cancelled; it gets brought into the 1980s; anything that has to be done, sensibly. I will either do it, or if I can't get behind it, I will leave the book and give it to somebody else who can. I'm not dedicated to the idea that I have to go on writing a hundred issues of this, like with ***CONAN***, or seventy, like I did with ***THE AVENGERS***, but as long as I can be happy with it, I'd like to read it.

I'm primarily writing this for myself, and hopefully thinking, I'm not a typical reader, and every year that I live, I become less a typical comic book reader. You were talking a while ago about getting old and wondering where the readers are coming from, I can't imagine having anything in common, except a general love of super heroes, or whatever, with readers who are ten, fifteen, even twenty years old. There's nothing I'm likely to have in common with them as much as when I was twenty-four or twenty-five and started writing comics, and the average reader was half my age or a little more, now they're a third of my age, or a quarter of my age, or whatever. And it's not going to get any better. (Laughs) But I feel I have a style, these are things I want to do, and either people are going to follow my writing as they follow other people's writing, or else I'm just going to have to forget about the idea of comics as a medium for personal expression at all. Right now, they're sort of in-between. On the other hand, they have to be commercial, and on the other hand, I'm trying to do with it what I really want to read. And I'm hoping that I can make other people read it. But I just like the idea of doing weird, different things.

[A short discussion of the Legion follows]

THOMAS: The thing is, I'm not anxious to make people die in the books, because one of the great diseases of the seventies, in comic books, was the dying character. Bringing about a gratuitous death because the artist doesn't like working with him.

CF: "Trivia Death?"

THOMAS: Beg your pardon?

CF: There was an article in ***THE COMIC READER*** which characterized deaths. . .

THOMAS: What was that word you said?

CF: Trivia.

THOMAS: Oh, yeah, "Trivia Deaths," right. I remember reading the article. I agree with what they said. A lot of the times it was the artist or the editor, but I think this was an unfortunate outgrowth of the writers being treated so much as ***de facto*** editors, as they were under me. We didn't call them writer-editors, but they had ***almost*** editorial powers. I mean, they had a lot of control. Sometimes an artist would too, but the writers were the natural ones, because they were the ones who came up with the stories. And there have been tendencies for writers to come in and just arbitrarily change things around: They kill off characters; they revamp things; The Valkyrie was changed back in costume three or four times for the stupidest reasons. I mean, she had a perfectly good costume that Buscema designed. There was no reason in the world to change the costume, yet it got changed for one or two months, and then another writer comes on and changes it back, and it was the most unconscionable kind of stupidity, I'm not talking about any one writer's responsibility, I'm just saying that it was collective. I've been a part of it sometime, too. You get carried away, and then the only time it ever makes a lot of sense to me to revamp something is when you really have a new direction. I woke up one morning and knew the ***CAPTAIN MARVEL*** book was going nowhere, a few years ago, and I decided we should change the costume and the whole approach, and luckily, Gil Kane came wandering in as the artist, and we did so well, that the book was actually brought back twice from the dead on the basis of what we did. But there are some characters that get so confused, like Ms. Marvel, and Captain Marvel, that I can understand some of the desire to kill them off. But that's like Truman and MacArthur. There's a whole thing between them, that any time a president has to fire a general, obviously, it's a failure on both parts. Not to come to any sort of logical terms that both could be happy with.

CF: It does seem that killing characters off—especially characters with some merchandising potential—is really an admission on the part of the writers, editors and artists that they really have no idea what to do with the character.

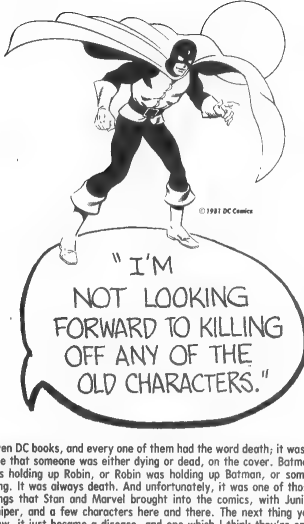
THOMAS: I agree. Now I'm bringing in this Firebrand character—although not in costume—into the ***ALL-STAR SQUADRON*** specifically to be killed off. I want to create a female Firebrand, because I need women in that group. But even then, Len may insist—and we're playing with this now—that the character may only be terminally wounded, or something like that.

CF: "Only." (Laughs) For a hundred and fifty issues, he's hovering on the edge of death.

THOMAS: Well, he could just be wounded. My own idea is I'd like to kill this character off, because they already have the other Firebrand that exists from Earth-X anyway. I want to kill that character off, but I'm really reluctant to kill *many* people, and this is funny. In ***ALL-STAR SQUADRON***, I could justify it more easily than most, because there's a war going on in which more than twenty to forty million people got killed.

CF: At least, there's some background for death.

THOMAS: And I've already used that a little bit, but I don't want to trivialize it, and I think that has happened so much when characters die. I made a mistake, too: We went to kill off Professor X at one stage, and the only difference was that it was very much intended that he might come back. So I set it up in such a way that he could. But, still, there weren't so many of them back then, and you could kind of get away with it. Now, what happened is that death just doesn't *mean* anything. I think Carmine, unfortunately, started it when he was publisher, because he had so many covers during the late 1960s, which had so many people dead or dying on the cover. I distinctly remember one in late '67 early '68, seeing on ad for six or



seven DC books, and every one of them had the word death; it was a case that someone was either dying or dead, on the cover. Batman was holding up Robin, or Robin was holding up Batman, or something. It was always death. And unfortunately, it was one of those things that Stan and Marvel brought into the comics, with Junior Juniper, and a few characters here and there. The next thing you know, it just became a disease, and one which I think they're only now beginning to realize that they've got to do something about.

CF: They have several characters die a year, these days.

THOMAS: That's logical, in a sense, as a lot of people die every year, but I don't know if that makes good dramatic comics, especially the way it's been done. As you say, when you're in business at least partially for the merchandising, you don't kill off those people in such a cavalier fashion. I don't think anything is solved by it. The only thing is, in my case, I knew that Firebrand was not a character that much could be done with, and if they decide to bring back The Freedom Fighters, he'll be in it anyway. But I'm not looking forward to killing off any of the old characters (certainly I won't be doing a lot of that, because they mostly existed after the war, anyway). ... I'm not interested in killing off any.

That, I think, [seems to be the primary representation of] the ultimate stupidity that happens sometimes—and I've been guilty of it, too. That's the companies' over-emphasis at various times of the *story* rather than the *series*. No one episode—or very few, at any rate—of a TV series is important. There may be some very good stories, but in the long run, it's the series that's important. You remember the ***MARY TYLER MOORE*** series, or something, more than you remember any one particular week. The main thing is the consistency of the series, and if you're doing it well, some of those stories are just automatically going to be better than others, and a few are going to be lousy, and some of them are likely to be gems because you've built up the characters in a way that you can really do them. I was watching the other night—for the first time in my life—the ***"Tribbles"*** episode on ***STAR TREK***. I knew about it. I knew David ***Gerrold***, who wrote it, and so forth, but I had never seen it, even though I knew basically a lot about the story. I was a little disappointed, because I thought it would be even better than it was, but it was still interesting, and it only worked because Spock and all the

SOON, WHEN TWO HAVE FINISHED THE PARTY, TO ENLIGHTEN AND EXPLAIN...
IT WAS REALLY GREAT TO MEET YOU, MARVEL BUNNY!
SAME HERE, SUPERMAN!
AFTER ALL, YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN MY FAVORITE COMIC BOOK HERO!
©1981 DC Comics

"I WAS TREMENDOUSLY THRILLED WHEN THEY ARRANGED FOR ME TO DO THAT '***SUPERMAN/ SHAZAM***" TEAM-UP [DC PRESENTS #33-4]."

other characters had been so well-established, that it was possible to put them into an adventure where life and death weren't the only issues (even though they were hovering in the background, almost as a concession to the network, I think). I have a feeling that nowadays, that story would be five times harder to do on a TV series than it was then, because in the last ten years, the networks have come more and more into the production end of things, having to approve all plots in advance, and the best way these relatively non-creative people can do that is to make sure every episode follows a certain formula. They'd say, "It's too whimsical." But the reason it works so beautifully is because the characters are reacting exactly as they would in life and death adventures, but they react to something that's a little different this time. I would love to do the equivalent with the ***ALL-STAR SQUADRON*** book or with ***THE LEGION***—have a story that is like that, and have the same kind of character bits, and they all behave the same ways, but it would be a different kind of story. But, like I say, it's something that would be very disappointing to the average reader. The average reader wants to see the Earth threatened, or else he wants to see some character's personal life threatened—it's always got to be something that seems "important." There's not much room for the whimsy of Eisner, or Cole's ***PLASTIC MAN***, or even the Captain Marvel characters. They just don't seem serious enough.

CF: There are some series even today that don't seem to deal with death, and melodrama and the earth being threatened, as you say.

THOMAS: Like for instance? I'm just curious.

CF: Like "***Shazam***" and ***SUPERBOY***. . .

THOMAS: Well, "***Shazam***," certainly, that's a hold-over from the old-style writing. Definitely.

CF: And ***SUPERBOY*** is itself a hold-over.

THOMAS: You mean the way it's done now? The last year?

CF: The present series is somewhere in between the Weisinger comics of the 1960s, and the Schwartz comics of the 1960s.

THOMAS: I see what you mean, because it now deals with the apprenticeship of Superboy.

CF: Pretty much.

THOMAS: Much more than when it was its own series before, and you had much more earth-shattering things, crime, secret identities —but Weisinger was interesting, though, because he managed to make those things just as important to the reader. And the more I look at it, the more accomplishment it seems to me it is, because you can't imagine now, spending a whole issue worrying about Peter Parker's secret identity as Spider-Man. That could become a subplot, but that doesn't become a reason for a whole story. Of course, also, Mort Weisinger always dealt with two or three stories an issue, so you'd have that variety. Nowadays, instead of doing two or three stories, you mix them all together and they become plots and subplots. Mort would have a story about saving the Earth, and another one with Lois almost finding out who Superman is. Now, they'll just combine those two into one long story, like a soap opera. I think one of the few things Stan accomplished, whether he wanted to or not, was the "soap opera-ization," you might say, of the comic books.

CF: Yeah, we might say that.

THOMAS: And he started doing it very consciously because he had to keep the comics going, and he himself was doing all the stories, so writing a continued story was a lot easier. He also sensed, very correctly, I think, that the individual story was decreasingly important. Once you get those first ten issues of ***FANTASTIC FOUR*** in which they're establishing the characters, and so forth, the individual stories weren't as important anymore, and you'd have these things between the individual issues of the ***FANTASTIC FOUR***, and about two or three years later, they would suddenly begin to think in terms of a series or trilogy. I mean, the first time the word trilogy got used seriously—even though it didn't fit very well—was in the "Galactus" story (although it's really two-and-a-half stories). But that became a trilogy, and suddenly, people began thinking more and more in those terms, and it became a major thing for the company. I think it still works—I hope it does, because I myself don't have that much interest in doing a perfect fifteen or twenty or twenty-five page story. What I want to do in ***ALL-STAR*** can't be done, ideally, with a twenty-five page comic with that number of characters, because in order to do that, I would have to write with a different kind of short-hand than I write with, and I couldn't develop the characters the way I want to. To me, two or three issues is the shortest I'd want to do a story like that. If a story came along I could do in one issue, I'd love to do it, but I don't like trying to force things into there, and I'm very pleased when I don't have to do that. Because I think the important thing is to make the reader want to come back the next month—that's so obvious in a way. Well, how do you do that? You can make him come back by giving him a good story every month, or you can make the stories interesting in a way that the reader wants to find out what happens next month. There are several different approaches. When I started doing the ***ALL-STAR*** thing I didn't know it would be almost a hundred pages spread out over the preview and three issues. As far as I'm concerned, there would be nothing wrong

"I'M TRYING TO DO WHAT I REALLY WANT TO READ, AND I'M HOPING I CAN MAKE OTHER PEOPLE READ IT."
...eye of the hunter, in a savage land born...!

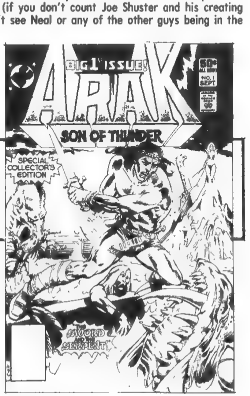
©1981 DC Comics

(as long as something happens every issue, and the readers like it) with a story which goes on for six months, or a year—provided you can hold their interest that long. The newspaper syndicates think that no story should run over eight weeks. They don't think the reader's attention will last that long.

The interesting thing about the comics field is you never really know when a person who's been salable for years will suddenly become the opposite. I think there's a reaction I've seen among a lot of young readers in recent years to Kirby's work, to the point where a lot of readers wouldn't look at the last few years—and I don't think it's just the writing: I think that tastes just change. And I don't think that there's any doubt that Kirby was the most influential super-hero artist of all time (if you don't count Joe Shuster and his creating Superman). I don't see Neal or any of the other guys being in the same class, even though they might be better in a lot of ways. But at the same time, the young readers wanted something *else*. They wanted more decoration, and so forth, they wanted something that looked more *real* to them. And I think this has a lot to do with television, they're looking to have more and more in the drawing, since there's less and less they want to put in themselves.

CF: It's kind of odd for you to say that you didn't want to work for a corporation, and now you're working for Warner Communication.

TNOMAS: That's the thing. What I meant was I didn't want to work for a corporation as the editor-in-chief. When you're a writer, it's disguised, to a certain extent. You're working ***with*** an editor, and you don't have to deal with all that. Now on the level that Shooter's at (or the level that I was at) the company wasn't so actively involved five or six years ago. It's different to be an editor-in-chief. I can see where it would still be challenging. It would still be fun, I suppose, to direct some portion of DC Comics—even though you were dealing with the conglomerate—and I could get into it again because I have a reasonably commercial mind, and I enjoy the wheeling and the dealing, generally. I enjoy the plotting, say, much more than I enjoy writing the dialogue. I've said this before, but I've never wanted to be a writer. I did, but a comic book writer, as such. I came in as assistant editor of ***SUPERMAN***, for the couple of weeks I was there, and then I was hired officially as a staff writer, doing assistant-editor-things at Marvel. Stan hired me to write pages, but I was never able to write pages on staff, and so I very quickly became what amounted to an assistant editor, as such—even though Stan was not thinking about hiring an assistant editor as such. He thought he was hiring a writer, but I never had any interest in being a full-time writer. And I still don't. The only thing is, DC has made it possible (through the good auspices of the people at the top, and Len, and Dick Giordano, and so forth) for me to do a lot of things which I wasn't doing up until, say, 1972 (when I became editor-in-chief) when I was doing things as we all did at Marvel; kind of quasi-editing my material. Now, obviously, the final decision is Len's, or Dick's, or somebody over their heads, so far as who the artists are and such, but the thing is, they consult ***with*** me a reasonable amount. In some ways, that's good to have that off my back, because I'm in the middle of writing a film, and it's probably best for me that I do spend less time with comics. I shouldn't be giving this interview, for example! It's totally economically cost-inefficient! (Laughs) There's no way in the world I can justify it as either a luxury, or something I'm doing as maybe good for the field. In the long run, though, there's no way to justify any of this stuff, because I should be writing the movie script right now! There are only so many hours in a day, I'm getting married in a few months, all these various things, yet here I am



The cover of the upcoming *ARAK, SON OF THUNDER #1.*

©1981 DC Comics

basically enjoying it.

That's why I enjoyed doing ***CONAN***. It's not that other people couldn't have done a good job; I was the one who developed the character with various artists, and kept the thing going through several different artists; I couldn't see a good reason to share Conan with anybody else, unless the sales were in bad shape. Did anybody ever come along and suggest that somebody else could do ***PRINCE VALIANT*** and make it a little more commercial than Hal Foster did?

CF: Cary Bates actually told us something very similar. That he'd been applying himself to the limitations and the potential of The Flash for so long that he thinks it would be very unsettling—and not particularly profitable—to move onto some other characters just for the sake of moving on.

THOMAS: It would be. The time you move on is when you really want to try a little bit of this and a little bit of that. But the thing is, Cary's been in the field, what, a decade? I've been in the field for sixteen years. It's not that we've exhausted the limits of the field; I don't think we've necessarily lost what we've had to offer by a long shot, but the kind of virtues we now have are the kind of virtues you see in a novel written by someone by whom you've read several novels before. And you say, in this novel you know what to expect in some way, and if the writer's any good, there will also be some things you won't quite expect, and as a result, you'll have enough of the new and enough of the familiar to be comfortable with it. Well, that's the way I feel writing something like ***ALL-STAR SQUADRON***, which I feel I've been writing in my mind, anyway. ***THE INVADERS*** were a warm-up for it, ***THE AVENGERS*** were a warm-up for it, everything I've read and written in super-hero groups were all warm-ups for ***ALL-STAR SQUADRON***.

As I said, I feel so removed from comics now, because I don't follow them as closely. And yet, I get every single one that comes out, Marvel, DC, I at least pay for them, and I collect everything. And yet, at the same time, I feel very alienated from them. But it did feel really good, I have to admit, to see the ***"Superman/Shazam"*** story come out. I had a better feeling about seeing that book on the stands than anything I've seen come out from Marvel in just years and years. It had nothing to do with the quality—though it was very well done—it had to do with the fact that it was what I wanted to do. (Of course, I was doing it with ***CONAN*** in a lot of ways, but the thing with ***CONAN*** was I had been doing it for so many years, it wasn't new anymore.) But to see Superman and Captain Marvel together in that situation, and with the "Hoppy" thing following, and now with the ***ALL-STAR SQUADRON***. . . It's going to give me a real rush of pleasure to see ***ALL-STAR SQUADRON #1*** in particular come out on the stands, and at my age of forty, it fills you with enthusiasm of that sort again.

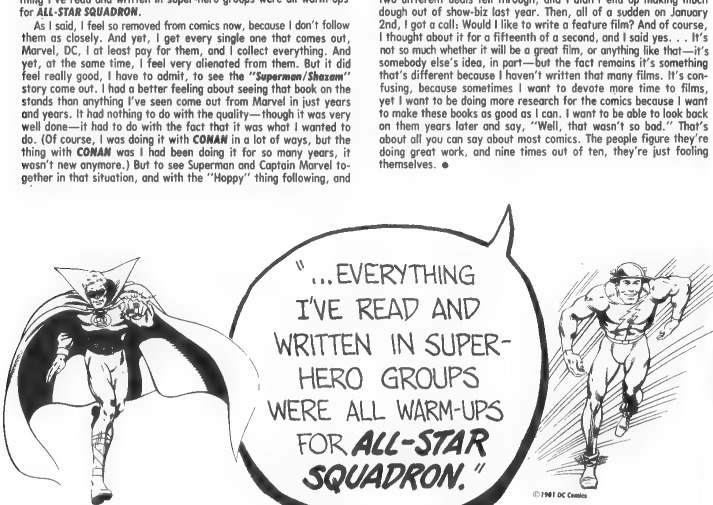
CF: Sounds good.

THOMAS: It's harder for someone who hasn't been doing it for a lot of years to imagine. But after sixteen years, somewhere along the line, there's got to be a point that you feel it just isn't that much fun anymore. You enjoy little things, you enjoy one particular panel, one particular plot element, but you really can't get into it because you're not doing anything new. And ***ALL-STAR SQUADRON*** being new, and the sword and sorcery book being new—I don't know if that will work out or not. But at least, they ***are*** new, and I find it an exciting time!

And looking back on it, it really kind of amuses me that I even questioned for a few seconds the advisability of leaving Marvel Comics, because there was nothing to hold me there, except the Conan character (which wasn't mine anyway), and the fact that I could make slightly more money at Marvel Comics. It just amazes me that I could have felt bad about leaving Marvel, because now it looks like this marvelous, wonderful thing I did. Not that it will hurt Marvel, because it won't particularly, but because it probably will be ***good*** for me, in a lot of ways. My one regret is now that I'm spending a little more time writing comics than I want to, because I'm involved in writing a film for actual money.

CF: Actual money?

THOMAS: Well, I had written one the year before, with Gerry, and two different deals fell through, and I didn't end up making much dough out of show-biz last year. Then, all of a sudden on January 2nd, I got a call: Would I like to write a feature film? And of course, I thought about it for a fifteenth of a second, and I said yes. . . It's not so much whether it will be a great film, or anything like that—it's somebody else's idea, in part—but the fact remains it's something that's different because I haven't written that many films. It's confusing, because sometimes I want to devote more time to films, yet I want to be doing more research for the comics because I want to make these books as good as I can. I want to be able to look back on them years later and say, "Well, that wasn't so bad." That's about all you can say about most comics. The people figure they're doing great work, and nine times out of ten, they're just fooling themselves. ●


"...EVERYTHING I'VE READ AND WRITTEN IN SUPER-HERO GROUPS WERE ALL WARM-UPS FOR ALL-STAR SQUADRON."
© 1981 DC Comics
© 1981 DC Comics

KA-ZAR

As with any radically different approach to an established character, opinions about the new *KA-ZAR THE SAVAGE* comic differ widely. Two of *COMICS FEATURE*'s reviewers offer some interesting—and different—observations about the new series' problems and strengths.

PART ONE

KA-ZAR THE IRRESOLUTE

by Chuck Huber

"Swamp means death, Zabu! There is better way! We find!" With this philosophical profundity, Ka-Zar introduced himself to The X-Men (and the Marvel readership) way back in ***X-MEN #10.*** Marvel's jungle lord has since become one of Marvel's most durable—if not most successful—second-string super-heroes. Ka-Zar enjoys the distinction of being the only Marvel character to have had three separate comic books named after him, even if one was a reprint title. (The lone exception being Conan, who still owes more to Robert Howard than to Marvel...) Now Ka-Zar and his saber-toothed pet are back again, with the most radical changes yet performed on them. To properly judge where Ka-Zar is headed now requires a look at the convoluted past of Marvel's jungle lord.

In a sense, Ka-Zar was already Marvel's oldest character when he debuted in ***X-MEN.*** The first incarnation of Ka-Zar was a pulp hero published by Manvis Publications (the "Man" referred to Martin Goodman, also publisher of Marvel Comics at the time) in 1936. The series, written by Bob Byrd, lasted all of three issues, which was not too surprising considering the horde of jungle pulps issued during that period, all inspired by the supreme jungle hero, Tarzan. Byrd's Ka-Zar was extremely derivative, as might be expected, complete with the usual African setting, a white boy (American, this time) raised in the jungle and becoming as one with the beasts. Young David Rand did have the advantage of having been raised by his human parents for rather longer than was John Clayton, but that's the only real difference between the characters. Even Ka-Zar's namesake, the lion Zar, owed a great deal to Jad-bal-ja, the incomparable golden lion of the Tarzan books.

Although Ka-Zar lacked enough uniqueness to last long as a pulp hero, his career was far

from over. Martin Goodman reincarnated him—in substantially the same form—in the first issue of the new ***MARVEL COMICS*** title, where the jungle hero shared space with The Human Torch and The Sub-Mariner. In his comic book incarnation the jungle lord showed a bit more staying power, and remained until issue #27 of ***MARVEL MYSTERY.*** His record was not at all bad compared with many of Timely's strips of the period, but Ka-Zar's comics adventures were nonetheless not very memorable.

Evidently, though, they were sufficiently memorable to Stan Lee to justify a revival in 1965. The Ka-Zar who encountered The X-Men was a rather different character, however. His dialogue owed more to Johnny Weismuller than to Edgar Rice Burroughs. Moreover, Lee had wisely shifted the setting of his jungle lord's adventures. By the mid-1960s, Africa could no longer be plausibly depicted as unknown territory to the readership, and so Ka-Zar's locale became the hidden Antarctic Savage Land, full of dinosaurs, mammoths, and other anachronisms. While the concept of the new Savage Land was hardly original (having been borrowed from Arthur Conan Doyle's Lost World, as well as from ERB's own Pal-ul-Don and Pellucidar), it did allow for more exotic adventure than Africa would. Best of all, it allowed the new Ka-Zar to discard the commonplace lion companion of his predecessor in favor of Zabu, the saber-toothed tiger. Jack Kirby had a field day depicting the prehistoric backdrop against which The X-Men and their new-found ally battled the sneaky Swamp Men, but the new Ka-Zar's career appeared to be just a one-shot, as the issue ended with his sealing the entrance to The Savage Land "behind tons of crashing boulders."

Somebody liked the jungle lord, though. The next year Ka-Zar returned for a three-issue stint in ***DAREDEVIL*** (#12-14) in which he acquired a brother (The Plunderer) and the beginnings of an origin. This was followed by a reprise in ***DAREDEVIL #24*** in 1967, and a guest-shot in ***SPIDER-MAN*** in 1968 (#57-8). He was one of the wave of characters who got solo "try-out" features in ***MARVEL SUPER-HEROES*** during Marvel's second wave of expansion in 1968 (#19), and he returned to the X-Men's comic in 1969 (#62-3). Finally, in 1970, his endurance was rewarded with a solo strip in ***ASTONISHING TALES***, which prepared him for his graduation into his own book in 1973. The next year, he inherited the lead spot in the ***SAVAGE TALES*** black-and-white magazine from Conan. It was quite an impressive situation compared to several arguably-more-important Marvel characters, but in 1975, ***SAVAGE TALES*** was discontinued, and in 1976 the ***KA-ZAR*** comic book was cancelled. It appeared that the original Jungle Lord had won again; Marvel had gained the rights to ***TARZAN***, and didn't need Ka-Zar.

The question becomes: why did Marvel bring Ka-Zar back now? The ***TARZAN*** book died a rather ignominious death, but for a given level of success, a "home-grown" character is worth more to the publisher than a licensed character. Perhaps the sales on the ***KA-ZAR*** book had justified its continuance. Why then did the character all but vanish for almost four years? And, if his popularity warranted bringing him back, why was the character changed so drastically when at last he was brought back?

QUIET! KA-ZAR IS GIVING THE SABER-TOOTH SOME SORT OF INSTRUCTIONS!
FINE!...SO LONG AS HE DOESN'T MENTION US!!
I'LL DO SOME RECONNAISSANCE ON MY OWN!
©1981 Marvel Comics Group

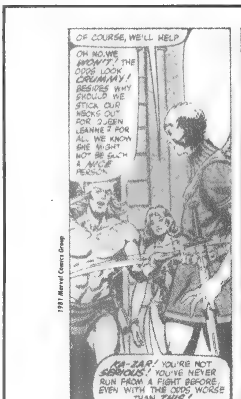
Ka-Zar in simpler times: "His dialogue owed more to Johnny Weismuller than to Edgar Rice Burroughs."

Listen to the words of Ka-Zar from ***KA-ZAR THE SAVAGE #1***: "[Have you ever thought]...that maybe all this jungle heroics stuff is just a ready-made excuse because neither of us has the courage to make it in a ***civilized*** world?" And later: "You say civilization's ugly—I say it's man's greatest achievement! Look at the New York skyline! Now ***that's*** an accomplishment!" Is this the same man who said in ***AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #57***, "At last! I can free myself of the unbearable trappings of civilization! At last I can move...I can breathe...I can be...***Ka-Zar!***" Or is it the man who, in ***KA-ZAR #1***, shed a parachute with a hearty "Away with these final remnants of city-men—may their faces be long absent from my sight!"

In the first issue of ***KA-ZAR THE SAVAGE***, this "savage" not only waxes philosophical about how wonderful civilization is, but also disdains intervening in an armed attack on a caravan until he notes a shapely female in the group (p. 14). He then has to be persuaded by said female, one Queen Leanne, to aid her (p. 18), and caps the sequence off by attempting to seduce the woman while they are both sitting in a tree directly above a pair of hostile sentries (p. 22-4). These action are not only atypical of the super-heroic tradition of courage, but the latter in particular is stupidity above and beyond the call of duty. So far as one can tell, the only thing the Ka-Zar of ***KA-ZAR THE SAVAGE #1*** has in common with the familiar Lord Kevin Plunder is his name, his face, and his affection for his saber-toothed chum, the ineffible—if underexposed—Zabu.

To people who feel that characters should not be arbitrarily changed, such developments are offensive. No explanation whatsoever has been given to justify such an abrupt about-face in personality. The major question to be considered is whether such drastic "surgery" was the only means of saving the "patient." In the opinion of many, the "old" Ka-Zar was simply ***dull***. Was there a consistent character there that was worth preserving?

In his debut with The X-Men, Ka-Zar was a one-note characters: "Stronger than mastadon! Stronger than giant boar! Mighty is Ka-Zar...lord of jungle!" Never one to squander a good line, Ka-Zar would get lots of mileage out of that pearl of dialogue in years to come. Save for his knowledge of English, there was little reason to suspect that the blond savage wasn't a native of "The World that Time Forgot!" as Stan initially styled it. Lee and Kirby could have gone in any direction with an origin, but in the character's return in


OF COURSE, WE'LL HELP.
OH NO WE SHOULDN'T! THE ODDS LOOK CATASTROPHICALLY UNFAVORABLE! BESIDES WHY SHOULD WE RISK OUR NECKS OUT FOR QUEEN LEANNE? FOR ALL WE KNOW SHE MIGHT BE EVEN MORE EVIL THAN MALICE HERSELF!
KA-ZAR! YOU'RE NOT SERIOUS! YOU'VE NEVER RUN FROM A FIGHT BEFORE, EVEN WITH THE ODDS WORSE THAN THESE!
TAKE A LOOK AT THE NEW KA-ZAR — IT'S JUST SAD — I'M GROWING — OF HIM
1981 Marvel Comics Group

"Shanna frequently expresses the opinion that Ka-Zar has changed."

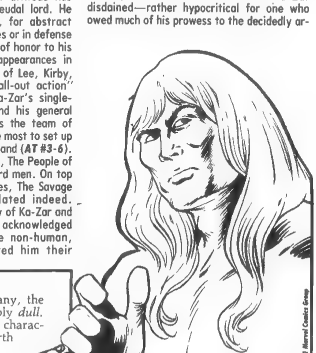
***DAREDEVIL* #12-4**, they opted for one with very familiar overtones. It was revealed (and elaborated upon in ***MARVEL SUPER-HEROES* #19** and ***ASTONISHING TALES* #11**) that Ka-Zar was really a scion of the English aristocracy. Young Kevin Plunder was brought to The Savage Land by his father, who had previously discovered the Anti-Metal there. Kevin was seemingly 10 or 12 at the time. It is fortunate that he was that old, for, unlike Tarzan, he didn't fall in with a community of language-learning primates. Had Ka-Zar been an infant when "abandoned," he might never have learned to speak, even if he had survived.

For some ten years after his rescue from the Swamp Men by Zabu, Kevin dwelt with his feline ally in the Place of the Mists. The mists, or something therein, gave Ka-Zar his somewhat super-human strength—great enough to out-muscle Daredevil in their encounters, or to match the double-strength of Gemini (***ASTONISHING TALES* #17**) of the chemically-augmented might of the new Super-Soldier, Victorius (***AT* #19-20**). (It seems obvious that Kevin Plunder also was genetically predisposed to great strength, because his brother, The Plunderer, has occasionally shown considerable physical prowess—although he generally does not apply that prowess to such arguably noble ends as does his long-lost brother. This strength and the accompanying survival skills were sufficient not only to gain him vengeance on the Man-Apes, but to win him general recognition as Lord of The Savage Land.

Ka-Zar's "rulership" is crucial, for it is the unifying element in his characterization over the years. His one consistent attitude has been that of an old English feudal lord. He fights—not as a super-hero, for abstract justice—but against old enemies or in defense of his "subjects" or as a debt of honor to his friends. While his first two appearances in ***ASTONISHING TALES*** (courtesy of Lee, Kirby, and Thomas) were mainly "all-out action" stories, they did establish Ka-Zar's single-minded devotion to Zabu, and his general disdain for civilization. It was the team of Conway and Smith which did the most to set up the background of The Savage Land (***AT* #3-6**). They introduced The Fall People, The People of the Sun, and the Vala-Kuri lizard men. On top of the previously-divulged races, The Savage Land seemed heavily populated indeed. Moreover, all these races knew of Ka-Zar and to greater or lesser degree acknowledged him as their lord. Even the non-human, pacifist Vala-Kuri considered him their "champion." Also introduced was Tongah, a warrior of The Fall People who was to become the most durable of the savage supporting cast. Despite his alleged old friendship with Ka-Zar, the jungle lord showed an alarming tendency to punch out his good buddy (***AT* #3, 6, *SAVAGE TALES* #11, *KA-ZAR* #14**). Their friendship, in the bulk of the stories, anyway, seemed genuine, but Ka-Zar was always the lord who must be obeyed, and allowed no friendship to transcend what he saw as his obligation.

Roy Thomas' "***New Brittania***" sequence (***AT* #8, 10**) didn't add too much to the characterization, but it did lend a few bits of background. It showed more of Barbara Morse, who would eventually be quite significant in the jungle lord's life (once she got who she was straightened out...). The expatriate British and Germans were also the first culture in The Savage Land to have no apparent knowledge of Ka-Zar and vice versa—though subsequent stories would indicate that The Fall People, among others, had managed to pick up some English and German from them over the years.

Following that, Thomas and Mike Friedrich took Ka-Zar out of The Hidden Jungle to the Everglades, New York, and England (***AT* #12,13,15-20**). For fans of more conventional super-heroic action, these were quite entertaining, featuring the return of The Man-Thing, and the tying in of Ted Sallis' work on the "super-soldier serum" to the rest of the Marvel Universe. By the end, Friedrich had Nick Fury, S.H.I.E.L.D., A.I.M., Gemini, The Plunderer, and Victorius all vying for the serum, the use of which Ka-Zar disdained—rather hypocritical for one who owed much of his prowess to the decidedly ar-



"In the opinion of many, the 'old' Ka-Zar was simply *dull*. Was there a consistent character there that was worth preserving?"

Subscriber ©1981 Marvel Comics Group

"The first two issues did introduce Ka-Zar to Shanna the She-Devil, thus setting up another potential romance."
Howell
character ™ 1981 Marvel Comics Group

tificial influence of The Place of the Mists. Amid the pyramiding jumble of the plot, a few more pieces of Ka-Zar's character were delineated. First, in ***AT* #15-6**, he demonstrated a general contempt for anyone's law except his own. Second, he repeatedly expresses an interest in Barbara (***a.k.a.*** Bobbi, ***a.k.a.*** Agent 19 of S.H.I.E.L.D.) Morse, but doubts that they have any future together so long as she prefers the teeming city to the swampy jungle. Also, it should be noted here that in #16, he spares the life of The Pusher—who had proven himself to be an evil and dangerous man—because "murder would lower me to the depths of those I combat!" Not every writer would consider this to be a natural reaction.

Graduation into his own title also returned Ka-Zar to The Savage Land. Unfortunately, Friedrich's plots remained jumbled, and the new cast—Malgato, Maa-Gor, El Tigre—did not make up for them. The first two issues did introduce Ka-Zar to Shanna the She-Devil, thus setting up another potential romance. Shortly thereafter, Ka-Zar took over ***SAVAGE TALES***, and Gerry Conway took over both Ka-Zar strips again. Ka-Zar remained an imperious feudal lord, but in these stories, far fewer of the people he encountered knew who he was. Perhaps the mistaken identity was caused by the fact that Ka-Zar had become a ruthless killer. In ***KA-ZAR* #7, 8,** and **10** and ***SAVAGE TALES* #7** and **9**, Ka-Zar kills opponents whom he could have defeated in non-fatal fashion. Granted, these were not unprovoked slayings, but this still represents a major shift in attitude. The Ka-Zar who made the aforementioned little speech after defeating The Pusher would not have said (as Ka-Zar exhorted in ***SAVAGE TALES* #7**), "...when Ka-Zar fights, Ka-Zar ***kills!***"

The accession of Doug Moench to the writership didn't immediately wipe the blood off Ka-Zar's name; indeed, in #19, he lapses into a berserk rage when attacked and insulted by Raknor the Slayer. However, Tongah did return (***ST* #11**) along with The Fall People, and Moench introduced the intriguing Zebra People. Throughout, Ka-Zar assumes the role of protector of his people, from entering hated civilization to save them from Anti-Metal-induced madness (***KA-ZAR* #14**), to venturing to the dimension of the Sheenars to save them from an alien invasion (#16).

A particular point of interest is the scene with Tandy Snow in #17 wherein Ka-Zar ponders his experience with women. Given how much of the action in his new title has been devoted to his interaction with Leanne and Shanna, the point is particularly important. More than most Marvel heroes, Ka-Zar seems to be the victim of the "James T. Kirk Syndrome"—a tendency to become seriously attracted to any nearby shapely female. From the seductive Queen Iranda (***AT* #8**) to Bobbi Morse to Shanna to Queen Omell (***ST* #9**) to Sheesha (***ST* #11**), he has been frequently smitten. But only with Sheesha did he actually express a love which was more than passion or intellectual attraction.

In the context of all this, where has ***KA-ZAR THE SAVAGE*** gone wrong? Most of the flaws are in the first two issues so far. They portray a Ka-Zar who is indecisive and fatalistic about life and death, good and evil. This is clearly out of character. Ka-Zar has always acted as a champion, in accord with the duties a liege lord owes his subjects. They depict him as being enamored of civilization, a most unlikely development. Even more strangely and pointlessly, his speech patterns have been American-ized beyond recognition. Where would Kevin Plunder, English noble and Antarctic savage have picked up a phrase like, "You guys will ***never*** catch for the Cardinals!" (***KTS* #2**)???

Ka-Zar's new character traits must be accounted for in one of two ways. Either something happened to him to change his outlook on life, or, by editorial fiat, he must be assumed to have "always" been that way. If the former, we have been shown no such event or series of events that could conceivably account for such a radical change betwen his appearance with The New X-Men (***X-MEN* #115-6**) and ***KTS* #1**—only a few months apart at most, according to the revisionist Marvel time-line. If the latter what kind of convincing origin is there for the character? How did a self-doubting Ka-Zar survive for a decade in The Hidden Jungle? Indeed, even in ***KTS***, Shanna frequently expresses the opinion that Ka-Zar has changed. Changed from what? And why?

Frankly, it's hard to see what sort of crisis in his life could possibly have made Ka-Zar behave in the way he does in the first two issues of ***KA-ZAR THE SAVAGE***. Yet it is possible that a plausible and character-enriching explanation could be devised. It is to be hoped that Jones, Jones, and Anderson intend one. Perhaps somewhere along the line they can attempt an explanation of the "hidden events" in Kevin Plunder's history which caused him to be renowned among the tribes of The Savage Land. We really have never been told why his name is legend, why so many people calmly accept him as lord and master. Surely having a buck-toothed pussycat is insufficient in and of itself.

If they can just purge his speech patterns of the ludicrous slang and American idioms, there is considerable potential in Ka-Zar's newest incarnation. The more recent issues seem to

be decreasing in maudlin self-pity and anti-heroics, and the spectre of Leanne seems to have been banished. The savage world of Pangea lends the opportunity for doing what the strip does best—exporation of and interaction with fantastic cultures and creatures. Many of the supporting characters among the bird-men have been well-wrought. With any luck, Ka-Zar is through with having to continuously rescue Shanna for a few years or so. Even if the stories have been painful at times, at least the Anderson/Garzon art has been pretty easy on the eyes, and someone is showing a nice talent for dreadful puns (***KTS #2 "To Air is Human," KTS #3, "To Forgive Daphine!"***).

In addition to all the above recommendations, it would be nice if the old cast of supporting characters and races would not be forgotten entirely. And though it is to be hoped that the quality of the book will rise to the point at which cross-overs are not necessary to ensure sales, I would be very pleased if someone could do a story properly comparing and contrasting the different attitudes of Lord Kevin Plunder of The Savage Land and Prince T'Challa of Wakanda.

I'm not sure is Ka-Zar's loss of self-confidence in the new ***KA-ZAR THE SAVAGE*** is to the character's benefit or not—certainly a hero who waits to intervene in an unfair fight until spurred by lust is less than admirable—but, if his new attitude is focused (and explained!) in the future, it could provide Jones, Jones, and Anderson with more opportunities for their hero's characterization than ever before. And certainly that's no more than Marvel's "oldest character" deserves. ●

PART TWO

KA-ZAR AT RIVERDALE HIGH

by Carol Kalish

Y'know, Shanna, I've never been so happy. I mean...you, me and Zabu running around the jungle—half-naked most of the time—! I think I'm finally getting over...
KA-ZAR-KINS!!
mmmmmmmmmm!
Oh-oh! Here comes some bad news!
KISSING ROCK
T. LUSHIN '87
characters sort of © Marvel Comics Group and sort of © Archie Comics

Have you ever wondered what would happen if Marvel published an Archie Comic? What, say, would happen if the mighty House of Ideas regaled their stunned readers with the misadventures resulting from that most famous of all comic-book love triangles, Archie Andrews, Betty Cooper, and Veronica Lodge? Well, you can stop trying to imagine such an unlikely event because Marvel is even now publishing a comic that, for all intents and purposes, is a dead ringer for ***BETTY AND VERONICA***. The title of this thinly-disguised Archie Comic? Why, ***KA-ZAR THE SAVAGE***, of course.

You don't believe that the new ***KA-ZAR*** book bears the least resemblence to Archie Comics? Well, let's take a look at the evidence and maybe you'll change your mind.

THAT'S THE WAY OF THE WORLD / BEHIND EVERY MAN IS A WOMAN HELPING, AIDING, LIFTING HIM TO HEIGHTS HE NEVER DREAMED OF /
MAN HAS ALWAYS NEEDED WOMAN / AND WOMAN HAS--- HMMM --- WE-LLLL ---
©1987 Archie Comics (Close-Up, Inc.)

Archie Comics use everyday situations to highlight their characters' respective world views.

A typical Marvel comic is action-oriented. True, there is always some interior introspection of the part of any given issue's hero, but such character bits rarely lead to long-lasting, or even meaningful, personality evolution. Indeed, characterization has become almost formulaic at the company—a plot device designed merely to encourage readers' interest in the adventure rather than furthering their understanding of the intricacies of the human psyche.

Indeed, most super-hero comics, not just those produced by Marvel, suffer from the familiar failing of being power-oriented. Action is the end result, the justification for the story. The quieter and more subtle aspects of social interactions might frequently appear, but they are never allowed to determine the story's conclusions. Ultimately, the story must revert to highlighting its principle entertainment element: physical conflict which is resolved often by nothing more than which fighter is physically the stronger.

A better Archie Comics title—I'd recommend ***BETTY & VERONICA*** for any Archie neophytes out there—recounts the adventures of formulaic characters, but does so in such a manner as to transform them into modern examples of "Everyman;" fictional paradigms of basic human behavior. The mundane adventures of Archie Andrews and his assorted lovers and cronies mirror and highlight typical human reactions and motivations. Character types (such as the bright-and-bubbly-blonde-girl-next-door Betty Cooper or the rich-bitchy-spoiled-dark-haired beauty Veronica Lodge) are contrasted by being thrust together into the same adventure—their varying reactions to their joint predicament underscore their character strengths and failings. Personal relationships, be they love affairs or "mere" friendships, provide intimate glimpses into the characters' motivations and development. All Archie plots revolve around such character development. Be the story as utterly silly as the one in which Betty and Veronica switch bodies or as mundane as the thrilling saga of when Betty receives an ordinary package, the intended result is the further clarification of the personalities of the leading players. It is only when the Archies abandon characterization in favor of simplistic, action-oriented plots that the stories lose their drive, charm, and versimilitude to become lifeless parodies of more typical super-hero comics. The success or failure of any Archie story depends entirely on the reactions of the characters to their situations, rather than to the situations themselves.

This dichotomy between the two comics companies and their divergent uses of characterization seemed, until recently, irreconcilable. Marvel seemed perpetually doomed to produce action-oriented comics bereft of substantial and revealing characterization, while the Archie Comics line remained committed to, while avoiding active adventure, illuminating human behavior via its large cast of eccentric, "typical teen-age" personalities. Fortunately for readers who look for both character evolution *and* exciting escapist fantasy, there now seems to be a new comics hybrid—a series which manages to combine high adventure with a provocatively insightful look at basic human drives and behavior. I refer to the purported subject of this review, ***KA-ZAR THE SAVAGE***.

OH,DEAR ME IS CRUSHIT ME! OH, WHAT EVER SHALL I DO?
OH KA-ZAR, YOU'RE SO MASTERFUL, SO MANLY! I'LL BE CARRY ME OFF TO YOUR RANCH HOME IN SCARSDALE WHERE WE CAN LIVE HAPPILY EVER AFTER ON PEDIATRIA WATER AND CUCUMBER DINNERS
YOU THINK I'M JUST GOING THROUGH SOME ADOLESCENT GROWING PAINS, DON'T YOU?
I THINK YOU'RE WASTING A PERFECTLY BEAUTIFUL AFTERNOON PHILOSOPHIZING WHEN YOU COULD BE KISSING ME...
©1987 Marvel Comics Group

Ka-Zar's pining for the "civilized" life contrasts vividly with Shanna's scorn for its affectations. Scenes like this one are the rule rather than the exception in the series.

Ka-Zar was first introduced as a walk-on-walk-off-again guest star in ***X-MEN #10***, and is therefore one of Marvel's oldest second-string heroes. Unfortunately, no matter how often he co-starred in a Marvel book or, indeed, supported his own independent title or series, he remained a one-note character: Ka-Zar, the Jungle Lord, a mere ersatz Tarzan with no real *shtick* of his own. Neither barbaric enough to be at ease in The Savage Land (Ka-Zar never seemed too willing to indulge in casual killing or violence in general and seemed prone to being restrained by an unusually civilized conscience.), nor urbane enough for his British homeland (Ka-Zar's mastery of civilized trappings seemed restricted to his wearing pants rather than a loin cloth and his refraining from bellowing his war-cry of "Mightier than mastadon..." in public.), Ka-Zar seemed to float uneasily between his two worlds while lacking either established and consistent motivation or a believable balance between his "savage" and "civilized" character attributes. He existed for one purpose: action, and lots of it.

Ka-Zar faded into comic book limbo in the late 1970s when his comic was cancelled. A recent revival of the series and the character exhibits a new orientation, one that leans away from the typical Marvel slam-bam action and towards the more realistic character presentation of the Archie line. Indeed the very storytelling techniques that writer Bruce Jones and artist Brent Anderson have adopted so far in the series are highly reminiscent of the typical Archie approach. Heavy use of character-indicative dialogue, idioscyncratic speech patterns, and a rather inventive use of body postures and facial expressions—all typical staples of Archie storytelling—are used at almost every opportunity. Philosophically divergent characters are often thrown together to allow the creators to contrast and highlight their characteristic differences (An especially effective use of this technique occurs in issues #2 and #4 where the manipulative Queene Leanne is contrasted against the far more straightforward (and heroic) Shanna.). Indeed even the creators' use of plot seems more indicative of the Archie approach than that of Marvel's since the series' adventures to date, especially key climatic situations, are designed to illuminate further aspects of the casts' personalities rather than to provoke further display of action.

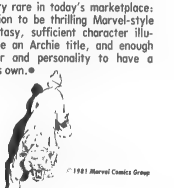
Consider the significant actions in ***KA-ZAR #1-4***: a romantic interlude between Ka-Zar and Shanna leads to a romantic interlude between Ka-Zar and a new love interest, Queen Leanne; a tiff between Ka-Zar and Leanne leads to a reconciliation between Shanna and Ka-Zar and a conflict between Leanne and Shanna (check the logo, folks, this is indeed a Marvel comic!); Leanne falls off a cliff and Ka-Zar and Shanna make up; then Shanna is strapped to a living frisbee by a blue bird-lady who lusts after Ka-Zar; Ka-Zar finds Shanna, but she's really Leanne (who's read ***BETTY & VERONICA #231*** and knows how to switch minds with your romantic rival) in Shanna's body, placed there by Leanne's new boyfriend, Dilton Doiley..er, my mistake, Tip. Oh, and in between all this (I don't know where they found the room) there are some half-hearted fight scenes, during one of which Ka-Zar tells a story he swiped from The Electric Co. (really!). The major action in issue #5 takes place when Ka-Zar frolics with his pet pussy-saber-tooth-cat and... well, you get the drift. Social interactions—love affairs, hate fests, jealous tiffs, and the like—form the whole thrust of the first five issues of the book, not action ***per se***.

YOUR WHOLE RELATIONSHIP TOGETHER HAS BEEN BUILT ON TREACHERY AND LIES! FIRST YOU TRY TO DECEIVE HER IN THE PTERON CAVE THEN SHE TRIES TO DECEIVE YOU HERE ON THE ISLAND! LORD KNOWS HOW MANY LIES THERE WERE IN BETWEEN
WHY STAY HERE WITH HER? WHAT PURPOSE?
KE SHE SA... WE BELONG TOGE...
©1981 Marvel Comics Group

Relationships are, throughout the series, used to define the personalities and motivations of the characters involved in them.

Jones and Anderson make lavish use of these relationships to underscore their development and expansion of their title character. As Ka-Zar struggles to come to grips with an advanced (and belatedly-explained case of culture shock, his behavior and values are contrasted with those of his lovers and friends. His philosophical angst and lack of emotional security are highlighted when viewed against the stability and settled world view of Shanna. Ka-Zar's loyalty and ethical behavior are reinforced when they are played off against the confusing drives of the cold-hearted Queen Leanne. The creators also have an excuse for their characters to actually *talk* to each other and thereby allow each character to define for himself in his own terms who he thinks he is, what his problems are, and why he just can't seem to solve them on his own. These conversations and exchanges of confidences are crucial to any reader's understanding of the character's motives, yet they are rarely shown in any comic not published by Archie. Finally, these relationships serve as springboards for what little action that does take place in the series. Ka-Zar leaves The Savage Land in #1 to trail Zabu—primarily because he is bound to the big cat by ties of love and loyalty. Issue #2's big "rescue Queen Leanne" climax is precipated by Ka-Zar's own desire for the queen and is complicated by that lady's own devious nature. True, there are extraneous action scenes (Ka-Zar kills a lot of dinosaurs who seemingly pop out of nowhere), but such action-loaded interludes are just that—breaks in the real story progression which chronicles the further evolution of "Ka-Zar the Character," from a one-note cardboard savage to a well-rounded personality whose motivations are clear to ***the*** readers.

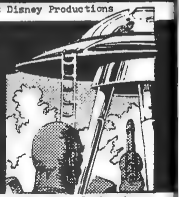
Perhaps this review's purpose—defending my claim that ***KA-ZAR THE SAVAGE*** is an Archie comic—was regarded by you as a joke? Perhaps you assumed that my likening it to an Archie would lead me into denouncing the new series? Nope. Jones, Jones, and Anderson have succesfully combined the best elements of both companies' storytelling approaches: Marvel's bountiful action and Archie's emphasis on character presentation. ***KA-ZAR*** is a series that offers its readers something very rare in today's marketplace: sufficient action to be thrilling Marvel-style adventure-fantasy, sufficient character illumination to be an Archie title, and enough individual flair and personality to have a charm all of its own.●



peter pan

©1980 Walt Disney Productions

H.G. WELLS



©1980 Marvel Comics Group

DR. WHO

©1980 Marvel Comics Group

British Fantasy
from its beginning
through its present
to its future

Please send me 12 issues for only $12.00.

Fantasy Empire

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State _____ Zip _____

FANTASY EMPIRE

c/o New Media Publications
12345 Starkey Road
Largo, Florida 33543

NMI
THE FANDOM ZONE PRESENTS...
50¢ FOR THIS!
DIAL "F" FOR FANDOM
CHRIS KINGLE
VICKI LOU GRANT
THEY BECOME THE HEROES YOU CREATE!
YES, NOW YOU CAN DESIGN THEIR COSTUMES, THEIR POWERS, THEIR HAIRSTYLES, THE FOOD THEY EAT, THE AIR THEY BREATHE, THE TV SHOWS THEY WATCH, THE COMIC BOOKS THEY READ, THE ARTISTS WHO DRAW THEM, THE WHO WRITE THEM, THE EDITORS WHO EDIT EM, THE PEOPLE
Now, Vicki Lou, as Writchie Wretch and Glory, we have our untold wealth.
Right, Chris! No more running around being "Goody-Two Shoes!"
YACHT
MOVIE STUDIO
WOMEN
FAST CAR
MO
WOMEN
COMIC BOOK SHOPS
Now we can be the spoiled brats that we are!!
CHECK BOOK
DESIGNER JEANS
CANNES
MEN
MONEY
MORE MEN
MORE NEW PAGES MORE NEW HASH
FEATURING THE CHARACTERS MADE UP BY OUR WONDERFUL READERS:
Wm. Shakespeare, I. Asimov, Betty Crocker, and
M. SNERD!
Writchie Wretch and Glory submitted by S. McDuck, Duckburg
T. WILSHAW '81

Fandom Almanac

COMICS CLUBS

Easley, SC. THE COLLECTORS CLUB. Monthly newsletter published. Membership: $5.00/year (includes 12 issues of newsletter). For info, contact: Steve Haynie, Rt. #6, Easley, SC 29640.

Fullerton, CA. WEST COAST COMICS CLUB. Meets at Fullerton Science Lecture Hall, #121, California State University, 7:00 p.m. Contact: Barry Short, 420 West 4th Street, San Dimas, CA 91773 (714) 599-2488.

Maplewood, N.J. COMICS CLUB MAPLEWOOD. Meets at 29 Norfolk Avenue, 8:00-9:00 p.m. Contact: Comic Club Maplewood, P.O. Box 65, Maplewood, NJ 07040.

Mt. Prospect, IL. PROSPECT HIGH SCHOOL COMIC BOOK CLUB. Meets at Prospect High School, Room 130, 801 W. Kensington Rd., every Tuesday at 3:00 p.m. Contact: R. Marr.

Nepean, Ontario, Canada. INTERNATIONAL COMIC COLLECTOR'S CLUB. Publishes a quarterly magazine and bulletin. Membership is $10/year. Contact: Ken Gorman or Mike Berthiaume, P.O. Box 11336 Postal Station H, Nepean, Ontario, Canada K2H5Z0.

Phoenix, AZ. PHOENIX COMIC BOOK CLUB. Meets at Quality Inn West, 2420 W. Thomas, 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Contact: Ken Strack, N. 22nd St., Phoenix, AZ 85018 (602) 992-3323.

Pittsburgh, PA. PITTSBURGH COMIX CLUB. Meets at Eddie's Comix & SF Shop, 11 Federal Street, every second Saturday from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. Contact: Ben Pondexter, 827 Anaheim, Pittsburgh, PA 15210.

Rochester, NY. COMIC BOOK PEN PAL CLUB. Newsletter published. For info, contact: The Comic Book Man, 135 Glen Ellyn Way, Rochester, NY 14618.

St. Louis, MO. SPECTOR COMICS CLUB. Meets at Century Bowl, 7508 Michigan, 1:00-4:00 p.m. Contact: Anthony Gladish, 3917 Ohio Street, St. Louis, MO 63118.

Urbana, IL. CHAMPAIGN-URBANA COMIC CLUB. Meets at the Illinois Union Building, Room 215, 712 W. Illinois, Urbana, every Thursday at 7:00 p.m. Contact: Mel DeSart.

Vancouver, B.C., Canada. VANCOUVER COMIC BOOK CLUB. Publishes the VCBC Bulletin and sponsors conventions. (V-Con). Contact: VCBC, P.O. Box 48873, Bentall Sta., Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7X1A8.

COMICS CONVENTIONS

MAY 2. PLEASURE DOME V, Wilmington Radisson Hotel, 8th & King St, Wilmington, De.

MAY 2. SKY CON I. Holiday Inn West, Hwy. 19-23 at I-40, Asheville, NC.

MAY 3, PHIL SEULING'S COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE, Statler Hotel, in the Penn Top Room, 7th Ave. & 33rd St., New York City, NY. Dealers' tables. Free.

MAY 9. COLLECTOR'S COMIC & CARD SHOW, Ramada Inn, 28611 Euclid Ave. (exit off I-90 north on Rt. 20), Wickliffe, OH. Admission: $1.00.

MAY 9. SARASOTA SF, COMIC BOOK & RECORD FESTIVAL, Airport Ramada Inn, 6545 N. Tamiami Trail (Rt. 41), Sarasota, FL. Guest: Joe Sinardi. Films, D & D, etc. Admission: $2.00.

MAY 17. THE COMIC BOOK SHOW, Stricker's Grove, 11490 Hamilton Cleves Rd. (State Rt. 128 just off I-275), Cincinnatti, OH.

THE EXQUISITE VISION ON THE YOUNG POLICE SCIENTIST'S FACE IS ONE RICHIE WARD HAS NEVER SEEN BEFORE!
YOU'LL NOW THERE'S ANY IDEA I WHADDA YA SAY, SHALL WE GIVE IT A SHOT?
OH BARRY, YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING!
©1981 DC Comics

MAY 17. CHICAGO MINICON, Pick-Congress Hotel, 520 South Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL. Free.

MAY 17. PHOENIX VI, Masonic Temple, 1119 S.W. Park, Portland, OR. Free.

MAY 18. THE EAST SHORE COMIC BOOK CONVENTION, Yankee Inn (Exit 42 off I-95), West Haven, CT.

MAY 30. GREENSBORO MINICON, Friendly Shopping Center, Greensboro, NC., Admission: 50¢.

JUNE 18-21. HOUSTON CON, Guests: Ray Harryhausen, James Doohan, Neal Adams, and Jack Kirby. Movies, TV Classics, Panels, D & D. Information contact: Houston Con, Inc., 1251 Wilcrest #7, Houston, Tx 77042.

1963: THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM

[Note: We'd like to remind the readers of what we've been saying in the previous four installments—that our view is, of necessity, a personal one. We can only check our own files for information on the early days of comics fandom. For that matter, many of those papers are "filed" in boxes in our attic, unreachable for the time being. We'd be grateful for alternate views of the time, and you can send them either to ***COMICS FEATURE*** or directly to us, ***Don and Maggie Thompson, 8786 Hendricks Road, Mentor, Ohio 44060.*** Thanks.]

by Don and Maggie Thompson

1963 saw the last issue of ***XERO***, one of the seminal forces in comics fandom. Dick and Pat Lupoff had begun it as what seemed to be just another science-fiction fanzine, but their interests were unusual and varied enough to attract attention, and their skill at expressing them was such that they kept the attention they attracted. Installments of the ***"All in Color for a Dime"*** series on old comic books continued, and the letter column of ***XERO #10*** (the only ***XERO*** of that year and the last issue of the magazine) had letters from Larry and Noreen Shaw, John Baxter, Harry Warner, Rick Sneary, Anthony Boucher, Vic Ryan, Eric Bentcliffe, Mike McInerney, Ron Haydock, Richard Kyle, Paul Williams, John Boardman, Bob Briney, Steve Stiles, and Betty Kujawa. ***#10*** had the customary mix of articles and opinion (including a fascinating piece by Bob Briney on Sax Rohmer's writing) and even some fiction (a short story by John Berry and the delightful-to-this-day ***"Two Flashes Meet the Purple Shgheap!"*** by Landon Chesney).

XERO impressed science-fiction fans so much that it won the Hugo for best SF fanzine of 1963, and we got to ride back from Washington, D.C. to New York City in the Lupoff's convertible with Phil Harrell in the back seat, endlessly polishing that gold-colored spaceship on his lap, an embarrassing sight. (Think about it.)

So 1963 saw ***XERO***'s influence leave the world of comics fandom—and comics fandom began to gather its forces to maintain its own existence. There were still many science-fiction fans who collected and discussed comics, but comics fandom began to grow and flourish separately as its own world from this point. Few were the comics fanzines that would feature letters from the likes of writer-editor-critic Anthony Boucher (who wrote to ***XERO*** to point out that a recent issue of the French edition of ***ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE*** announced the formation of Le Club des Bandes Dessinees, the French comics club). We don't mean to knock the comics fandom of the mid-sixties, but there really grew to be less such input for a time. Comics fandom became composed primarily of persons interested in comics and nothing else, rather than persons who were interested in comics among many other things. There is a very great difference.

(Incidentally, we should point out that this column is a view of the development of comics fandom in the United States. 1963 marked the beginning of ***MODESTY BLAISE*** in England and the organization of the above-mentioned French comics club. SOCERLID, a major French comics club founded by people like Pierre Couperie and Maurice Horn, would begin the next year, as would ***DOWN UNDER***, John Ryan's comics fanzine from Australia. But we are not really equipped to discuss this aspect of fandom's development. We'd like to hear about it from fans from other continents, though.)

The third Alley Awards (given for publications done during 1963) had twenty-eight categories. That was almost a third more than the previous year; roughly 250 ballots were cast. We'll discuss the actual tallying in our coverage of 1964 (when the counting took place), but for now we'll simply mention that ***THE COMIC READER #24*** carried the results.

You may be able to see some trends emerging in all of this. It was the second year that Marvel had really been in competition, and it took two-thirds of the categories. You can also see the heavy super-hero weighting of the awards, right down to the fan awards; only two categories did not have super-hero-associated winners, the category for best humorous comic and the one in which an in-depth examination of the comic strip ***MINUTE MOVIES*** won as best article.

These awards are interesting in another way; they were something of an attempt to

ALLEY AWARDS FOR 1963

I. Pro Categories

1. Best Editor: Stan Lee
2. Best Writer: Stan Lee
3. Best Artist: Carmine Infantino

II. Best Comics

4. Adventure-Hero: ***SPIDER-MAN*** (31% of the vote)
5. General Fantasy: ***STRANGE ADVENTURES*** (47%)
6. Mundane Fiction: ***SGT. FURY & HIS HOWLING COMMANDOES*** (62 %)
Humorous: ***UNCLE SCROOGE*** (34%)
8. Favorite Short Story: ***"The Human Torch Meets Captain America" (STRANGE TALES #114)***
9. Favorite Annual: ***FANTASTIC FOUR ANNUAL #1*** (68%)
10. Favorite Novel: ***"Crisis on Earth I and II" (JLA #21-22)***
11. Top Hero: Spider-Man
12. Top Group: Fantastic Four
13. Top Supporting Character: The Thing
14. Top Villain: Sub-Mariner
15. Strip Favored for Revival: Dr. Fate (214 votes)

III. Amateur Division (on a scale of 5)

16. Article: ***"Minute Movies"*** Hal Lynch & Vern Coriell (***COMIC ART #4***) 4.31
17. Illustrated Strip: ***"The Eclipse"*** Drury Moroz & Ronn Foss (***ALTER EGO #5***) 4.22
18. Fanzine Fiction: ***"The Black Panther"*** John Wright (***KOMIX #2***) 4.06
19. Single Illustration: ***STARSTUDDED COMICS #2*** cover (Buddy Saunders) 4.28
20. Fan Project: ***AUTHORITATIVE INDEX TO DC COMICS*** (Howard Keltner & Jerry Bails) 4.50
21. Fan Artist: Ronn Foss 4.19
22. Fan Writer: Jerry Bails 4.40
23. Comics Amazine [Fanzine]: ***THE COMIC READER #15-#20*** (Jerry Bails) 4.53

CAN'T ANYTHING STOP YOU JUSTICE LEAGUE CHARACTERS? YOU'VE BEEN FIGHTING US FOR YEARS! REALLY HAVING THAT'S HOLD YOU FOR A
YOU'VE GIVEN US A GOOD FIGHT, DOCTOR ALCHEMY!
©1981 DC Comics

IV. Write-In Categories

24. Strip That Should Be Improved: ***JUSTICE LEAGUE*** (15%)
25. Cross-Over of DC Heroes for ***BRAVE & BOLD:*** Hawkman and Flash
26. Artist Preferred on ***SEA DEVILS:*** Joe Kubert (70%)
27. Artist Preferred on ***JUSTICE LEAGUE:*** Murphy Anderson (32%)
28. Comic Displaying Best Interior Color Work: ***MYSTERY IN SPACE*** (22%)

communicate to the fans and pros something of the way fans would like ***to see the comics go.*** Whether fans should be catered to has long been debated in the field, and it may be a question with a changing answer. Circulations of comics in 1963 were enormous by today's standards, and cover prices less (12¢). Comics were overwhelmingly bought by children, and only a tiny fraction of the audience gave serious critical thought to illustrated fiction or "graphic stories." (Maggie once asked a child about comics in the mid-sixties. "Do you read ***SPIDER-MAN***?" she asked. "Oh, no!" the girl replied. "I ***hate*** spiders!")

If all the people in comics fandom had suddenly stopped buying comic books in 1963, it wouldn't have made a dent in circulation figures. As a result (and since comics ***fans'*** interests are not necessarily those of the ***comics reading public at large***), editors tolerated fans but didn't feel much inclination to follow suggestions. By the end of 1975, fandom was a strong enough force to foul up the distribution of ***HOWARD THE DUCK***, with fans and dealers combining to turn it into an instant collector's item. But in 1963, there was no such thing as a "comics specialty shop," and fandom was a tiny thing.

Mind you, there was an activity that would affect comics dramatically in later years. 1963 saw The Texas Trio's first issue of ***STARSTUDDED COMICS*** and the emergence of more and more amateur writers and artists producing strip after strip for the delight of working in the medium of comics art.. Some of these would go on to become professionals; some of them would simply inspire fans who would, in turn, become professionals.

You'll note, moreover, that Jerry Bails continues to pop up in fan polls. He was the major moving figure of the early days of comics fandom, constantly acting as an inciting force in different aspects of the microcosm. Roy Thomas recently commented to us that, while he helped out on ***ALTER-EGO***, it was Jerry who had been the real foundation of the magazine, and there would not have been an ***ALTER-EGO*** without Jerry. (It seems especially appropriate that Jerry will be a 1981 San Diego Comic-Con guest of honor. Comics fandom literally would not have been the same without him, though he has not maintained a high visibility to today's comics fandom. His contributions have been varied and fundamental.) 1963 is by no means the last time his activities in the history of the fan world will find his name listed.

Our own efforts in 1963 were less visible than in some other years. We were financially crippled by what was at that point the longest-running newspaper strike in American history (129 days). We were married in the summer of 1962, and Maggie was well into her junior year at Oberlin College, when the Cleveland newspaper strike began in November 1962. (Don works for the ***CLEVELAND PRESS***.) That winter was bitterly cold, we had little money, and by the time 1963 was well under way, we were well into the hole financially. That doesn't tend to produce much in the way of exciting fan activity.

As we wrap up discussions of 1963, it might be the place to caution readers who are new to the world of fandom: Real life, however exciting fandom may be, is real life. In times of crisis (whether of health or wealth or sanity), fandom is ***and should be*** the first thing to go. The comics fan in us is upset at a newspaper strike because of the loss of consecutive runs of strips. But when shortage of food hits at the same time, a comic-strip hiatus loses importance.

Think of that the next time a fanzine you expect in the mail is a month late. The editor may have job or domestic problems, ill relatives, or severe personal health problems. By all means, ask the editor about it, but don't be nasty; you may need people to be polite to you someday.

1963 may not have been a landmark year in comics fandom, but forces were building to make 1964 a time of change. ●

NEXT MONTH:
"Getting Together"

qualified praise

by Carl Docks

SUPERNEWS #5
5½ x 8½, 28 pgs., $1.25 from Paul Spagnuolo, 43 Cameron Ave., Cambridge, MA 02140.

SUPERNEWS is a zine devoted primarily to films, with occasional articles on other media. This issue features ***Young Frankenstein***, ***Assault on Precinct 13***, and more.

The ***Young Frankenstein*** feature is a portfolio by current ***CF*** contributor Tom Linehan, featuring caricatures of the actors in their roles. Linehan captures the likenesses in perfect poses; the result is very enjoyable, something you'll get a smile out of. An appreciation of the film by editor Spagnuolo is included.

Spagnuolo also provides the cover feature, a look at the work of John Carpenter, director of ***Assault on Precinct 13***, ***The Fog***, and ***Halloween***. The article compares those movies and discusses the techniques Carpenter used.

The "more" blurbed on the cover includes columns by Linehan on symphonic soundtracks, reviews of Super-8 Film releases by John Cardello and Jim Molitor, a media review column featuring quotes from screenwriter Frederic Raphael on the state of television, fanzine reviews, a commentary column called "Tales from the... Crypt?," and letters.

This is a friendly zine; as Spagnuolo says, "I don't claim that this is ***the*** film journal that no film buff should be without, but I do believe that we've had some valid and interesting things to say." They do; it'd be worth a film-fan's while to pick this up. ●

FANFARE #3, Spring, 1980
8½ x 11, 64 pgs., $2.50 from Bill Spicer, 329 North Avenue 66, Los Angeles, CA 90042.

FANFARE accurately bills itself as "The Magazine of Popular Culture and the Arts." While many of the articles have some connection with comics, many more do not.

The cover feature is "***TV Animation in Japan.***" Written by Fred Patten, the foremost expert on the subject in America, the article covers both the history and the current scene of Japanese TV cartoons. Very well illustrated with both stills and magazine covers featuring characters, the article contains both information about the shows themselves and the studios that produce them—with some information on Japanese animation fandom as well. Easily an article everyone should read.

"***The Philosophy of MAN-THING***" is a four-page examination of Steve Gerber's work on the title. Writer Rodney Shroeter takes the position that ***MAN-THING*** was a failed experiment in comics writing because the series presented no positive role models to the reader, only anti-heroes not worth emulating.

The final comics-related piece is a profile of

Bill Elder's commercial art. The examples are divided between television and movie ads, with a few assorted other pieces thrown in as well. Elder has a wild sense of humor, and while the sight gags he can include are limited by the specific requirements of the advertisement itself, there is still plenty here to enjoy.

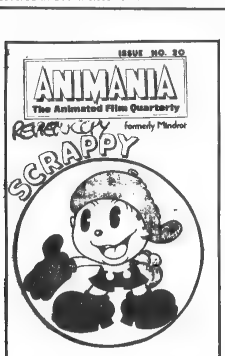
The lead article on a non-comics related subject is on beauty pageants. Jane See White focuses on the potential pitfalls of such pageants—while many are reputable and provide models with needed visibility, others are simply run for the profit of the sponsors. White indicates the characteristics of the more shady operations and gives valuable advice to the novice pageant-entry.

Stanislaus Szukalski, artist, writer, and philosopher, writes about his meeting with Frank Lloyd Wright in the early part of the century. Szukalski had been asked to decorate one of Wright's buildings; however, the two men failed to come to any agreement on how it should be done. The article, fronted by an except from Szukalski's autobiography, also contains a considerable amount of his philosophy. Casual readers should not be put off by the at-times heavy reading this philosophical content entails; the piece is definitely worth the time and effort it demands from the reader.

The current state of the record industry is covered in Bob Theissen's "***In Both Ears and***

Out the Other." Theissen explains the cutbacks by record companies and the changes in promotional strategies that have occured over the last few years. Accompanying the piece is an article by Robert Hilburn, "***The K-Tel Sell***," which documents that record company's history. A couple other short pieces, a media commentary column, and a long meaty letters section round out the issue.

I feel very uncomfortable calling ***FANFARE*** a "fanzine." It is a professionally produced, slick magazine that could physically compete with most anything on the newsstand save for its lack of advertising. Given the quality of Spicer's first three issues, I can wish him every success for the future. Do buy this. ●



ANIMANIA: *THE ANIMATED FILM QUARTERLY* #20
(formerly ***MINDROT***)
5½ x 8½, 36 pgs., $2.00 from David and Kathy Mruz, 3112 Holmes Ave., South Minneapolis, MN 55408.

MINDROT was a well-respected animation zine whose title caused a few problems; as editor David Mruz mentions in his editorial, punk rock fans were picking it up expecting a fanzine devoted to their interests. ***ANIMANIA*** emphasizes the magazine's sense of humor without leaving any doubt as to its focus.

The cover feature this issue is a filmography of the Mintz/Columbia ***Scrappy*** films. "***Scrappy*** who?" you say? That's why the filmography. Scrappy was a 1930s cartoon character whose adventures were created by a number of people who later went on to achieve success with Warner Brothers, Walt Disney, and other studios. Writer Paul Etcheverry feels that the cartoons are not widely seen because they are in black and white and are somewhat atypical of most cartoon series: "The pre-1936 efforts match child characters with scenarios notable for heinous villains, outlandish situations, strange camera compositions, surreal dreamlands, and bizarre shock gags." A very complete overview of the series follows, and after that comes the superbly-researched filmography, which lists the cartoons produced from 1931-36. Plot synopses and credits are included wherever possible. Illustrations from a ***Scrappy*** Big Little Book decorate the article. A fine job.

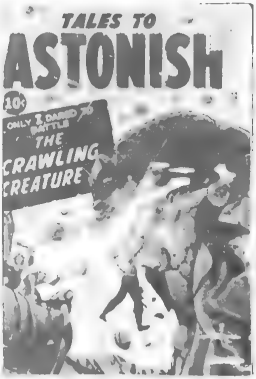
Also in this issue is the first column by Leonard Maltin, animator, writer, and teacher. The column this issue is the "***Cartoon Equivalency Examination***," which he hands out to his students at the New School for Social Research during their first meeting to test their knowledge of animation. Answers are provided for those who aren't quite sure or need to brush up on the subject. Maltin's sense of humor is evident here, and this column should prove to be a lot of fun.

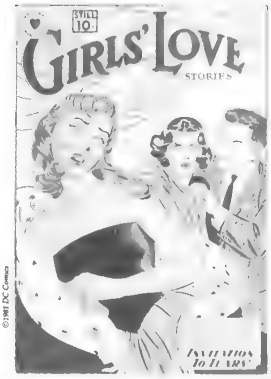
Jim Korkis' "***Harlequin***" column appears again. Jim can always be counted on for plenty of interesting trivia, and he follows through here, with historical tidbits and items about old and new cartoons and their animators.

A letter column rounds out the issue. The letter column, as is most of the magazine, is devoted to the exchange of information; LoCs on post issues ***per se*** are less frequent than answers to post questions.

ANIMANIA's one of the foremost American animation 'zine; if you've the slightest interest in the field, this magazine will hold that interest. ●

20 Years Ago this Month





SUPER-TEAM SPIRIT

presents...

AN ALL STAR SERIES

Having examined the super-hero groups that sprang both immediately and in retrospect from the other comics publishers of the 1940s, we now at last turn our attention to the originators of the super-team concept, DC. In an effort to match the sales of their two top-of-the-line characters, Superman and Batman, in a single title, they created the first and greatest of the super-teams, The Justice Society of America.

by Murray Ward

I. ORIGINS

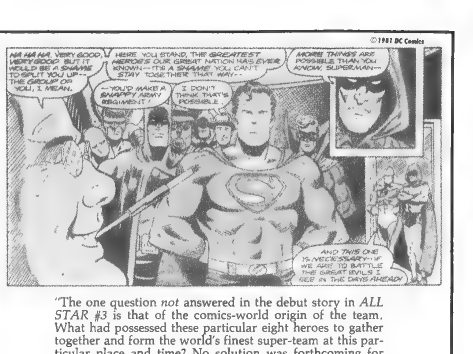
As stated in a previous installment of this series, every character or concept in comics has two origins: its real-world origin, the way in which its genesis was formed by a team of writers, artists, and editors; and its comics-universe origin, the story of how the various characters or events came to be in the world in which they "exist." The Justice Society also has two origins, each more complicated than most.

In the world of comics publishing, the DC comics group of the early 1940s was slowly splitting into two factions, the main DC group and the All-American group. In 1960s terms, these would correspond roughly to the Mort Weisinger/Jack Schiff-edited Superman-and-Batman titles and a few unrelated others as the DC line; and the Julius Schwartz-edited collection of characters such as Flash, Green Lantern, Atom, and Hawkman as the All-American line. In 1940, of course, we are dealing with what today are known as the Earth-Two versions of these characters, the so-called "original" Superman, Flash, Hawkman, etc., and the characters are not distributed in titles in the same manner as in the 1960s. First, it must be remembered that although the comics of the Golden Age still cost 10¢ apiece, they were larger and thicker than any of today's entries. The "normal" comics of the 1940s had almost as many pages as what a later generation of fans would call "giant comics": 68 pages per issue, counting the covers. Rather than increase the price over the years as has been the custom in the 1970s, the publishers retained the dime price-tag and cut the number of pages slowly, resulting in issues with 64, 52, 48, and eventually 32 pages, of which an increasing number were devoted to ads rather than stories. In 1940, however, given 68 pages to fill each issue, few were the characters popular enough to support an entire comic by themselves. The phenomenal success of Superman prompted DC to spin him off into his own title after his debut in ***ACTION COMICS***, where, of course, he continued to hold down the lead spot. Even so, ***SUPERMAN*** was a quarterly-issued title, a cautionary procedure which seems strange to fans reared on ***SUPERMAN ANNUALs*** which appeared at least that often. Likewise, ***BATMAN*** was a quarterly spin-off from ***DETECTIVE COMICS***, where he also retained the lead story. The All-American portion of the company, however, was less secure, and hesitant to launch any of their super-heroes in a quarterly vehicle all his own. Still, they felt the need to compete with the Man of Steel and the Caped Crusader (to say nothing of such other-company solo stars as Captain Marvel, Captain America, *et al*). What to do, what to do? Their super-heroes were distributed through a series of anthology titles like ***ACTION*** and ***DETECTIVE*** in format. The first four of these magazines were ***ADVENTURE COMICS***, ***MORE FUN COMICS***, ***FLASH COMICS***, and the title that, like ***DETECTIVE*** for DC, gave the line its name, ***ALL-AMERICAN COMICS***. Three out of the four had evolved, like ***DETECTIVE***, gaining their super-hero "stars" only after many issues had been published. As Batman had made his debut in ***DETECTIVE*** only in #27, so had ***ADVENTURE*** only gained its first costumed hero in #40 with The Sandman, ***MORE FUN*** its first super-powered avenger in #52 with The Spectre, and ***ALL-AMERICAN*** its first larger-than-life champion in #8 with The Ultra-Man, who was soon eclipsed by Green Lantern's premiere in #16. Only ***FLASH COMICS*** had begun as had ***ACTION***, with a super-hero, in fact more than one super-hero. The first issue, which included not only the book's namesake character, The Flash, but also featured the premiere appearance of Hawkman.

The All-American staff came up with the brainstorm of yet another anthology book as ***their*** quarterly blockbuster, but ***this*** anthology would feature the favorite characters from their other four books all in a single title together. The first issue of ***ALL STAR COMICS***,

dated Winter 1940, featured vignettes from Sandman, Flash, Ultra-Man, and Spectre stories on the cover, with additional adventures of Red, White, and Blue; Hourman; Biff Bronson; and Hawkman within. Continuing to experiment, the second issue featured a far more attractive cover highlighting Green Lantern, Spectre, and Flash, and inside, GL and Johnny Thunder replaced Ultra-Man and the non-costumed Biff Bronson. It was only with the third issue that the format of individual unconnected tales of the various characters was dropped in favor of some link between the eight episodes, some "reason" why these characters were appearing together in ***ALL STAR*** instead of just holding down the fort in their separate "home" titles.

ALL STAR #3 introduced the Justice Society of America, a grouping of the major DC superheroes under a single banner to fight for the right, and incidentally to talk shop with each other, which is all they did at that first meeting. The individual stories of each character continued, but a framing story was created in which the super-stars gathered for a formal meeting and dinner, at which they swapped tales of past exploits in a good-natured round of "Can You Top This?" Chosen as the charter members of the group were two from each of the four All-American titles: Flash and Hawkman naturally represented ***FLASH COMICS***; Green Lantern and The Atom came from the pages of ***ALL-AMERICAN***; The Spectre and Doctor Fate were the ***MORE FUN*** delegates; and Sandman and Hourman were drafted from ***ADVENTURE.*** Of course, even in 1940, superheroes (or as they were then known, costumed mystery men) were never slaves to conformity, else they would never have begun to run around the streets at night clad in masks and tights, so the colorful cast themselves introduced a few unexpected wrinkles to that first meeting. First, so as not to totally ignore the characters with whom ***ALL STAR*** was designed to compete, passing mention was made of the Superman, Batman, and Robin, the first two of whom were named "honorary members" (a term whose real meaning seems to have been "members too darned busy to show up at the meetings"), and all of whom were said to be engaged in their own cases, or, as Flash put it, "since ***we're*** all here, somebody's got to look after things and protect people, so they're pretty busy right now." Second, it proved impossible to hold even the membership-in-attendance down to the eight scheduled players. Having had his shot at an ***ALL STAR*** berth in #2, Johnny Thunder, the non-costumed screwball with the magical helper, was not about to be put aside so easily. He crashed the inagural meeting and practically took over the proceedings, as it was he who suggested the round-robin storytelling which took up most of the book. Nor was Johnny the only comical character who showed up unannounced; The original Red Tornado (alias housewife Ma Hunkle), whose costume consisted of long red woolies and a saucepan helmet (much like the later Marvel lampoon, Forbush-Man), also put in a one-page cameo appearance, fresh from her stomping grounds in the ***ALL-AMERICAN "Scribbly"*** strip. (Like anybody who ever so much as dropped by to say hello in ***ALL STAR***, she was made an honorary member, although Johnny Thunder would have to wait a few issues to have his status clarified.) With issue #4, the team members began to take on actual cases together, rather than swapping tales, although each hero still had his own story, a chapter in the larger "framing" story, in which he battled some aspect of the group menace as drawn by his own artist. Only in the later years, as the size of ***ALL STAR*** shrunk, did members do battle in groups of two or three in the style of even the earliest Justice League adventures.


©1981 DC Comics
AH AH AH! VERY GOOD! VERY GOOD! BUT IT WOULD BE A SHAME TO SPLIT YOU UP--THE GROUP OF YOU, I MEAN.
HERE YOU STAND, THE GREATEST HEROES OUR GREAT NATION HAS EVER KNOWN--IT'S A SHAME YOU CAN'T STAY TOGETHER THAT WAY--
MORE THINGS ARE POSSIBLE THAN YOU KNOW, SUPERMAN--
--YOU'D MAKE A GRAVELY AWAY ARRANGEMENT--
I DON'T THINK THAT'S POSSIBLE--
AND THIS ONE IS MERCILESSLY--IF WE HAVE TO BATTLE THE GREAT DEVIL'S HOST IN THE DAYS AHEAD!

"The one question *not* answered in the debut story in *ALL STAR #3* is that of the comics-world origin of the team. What had possessed these particular eight heroes to gather together and form the world's finest super-team at this particular place and time? No solution was forthcoming for over 35 years!"

The one question ***not*** answered in the debut story in ***ALL STAR #3*** is that of the comics-world origin of the team. What had possessed these particular eight (nine, counting Johnny) costumed heroes to gather together and form the world's finest super-team at this particular place and time? No solution was forthcoming for over 35 years! The Justice Society as a team never had a known origin, until the "lost" adventure was finally recounted in ***DC SPECIAL #29*** in 1977. The cause for their joining turned out to have been a particularly apt one, given the number of early JSA cases that involved World War II themes and threats: Adolf Hitler, inspired by his acquisition of a supernatural weapon (which was introduced by Steve Englehart in ***WEIRD WAR #50***, of all places), launched a secret invasion of Britain in 1940, an invasion foiled only by the joint efforts of ten color-splashed crimebusters, namely the eight JSA charter members—plus "honoraries" Batman and Superman—who thereupon formed the coalition which met in ***ALL STAR #3*** as The Justice Society. Alerted by British agents, Commissioner Gordon summoned Batman and his fellow Gothamite Green Lantern, together with The Flash, to deal with this scheme, while the other heroes were gathered in groups of two or three by the mystic powers of Doctor Fate.

As we have seen, however, the line-up of the first super-group was anything but predictable and stable. There ***were*** rules, though, which determined the fluctuating nature of the roll call.

B. ORGANIZATION

Like their dual ***raison d'etre***, The Justice Society's organizational structure was also of a two-fold nature. On the face of things, which heroes left the ranks and which remained with the team was determined by a carefully-drafted charter of rules and regulations. Lurking in the four-color background, though, were the ***real*** masterminds of Earth-Two's destiny, the editors of the All-American line.

At this point, we should mention these gentlemen by name. Curiously enough, most of the powers-that-be behind ***ALL STAR*** had or would in the future figure prominently in the destiny of Clark Kent's alter ego: M.C. Gaines, publisher and managing editor of All-American, was the man who first bought the ***"Superman"*** strip for ***ACTION COMICS***; Sheldon Mayer, editor, was the one who bought the strip to Gaines' attention (as well as being the creator of the aforementioned ***"Scribbly"*** and such later gems as ***SUGAR AND SPIKE***); and Whitney Ellsworth, his successor, had been Superman's editor and would go on to become DC's liaison with the 1950s ***SUPERMAN*** TV program. Among the editorial

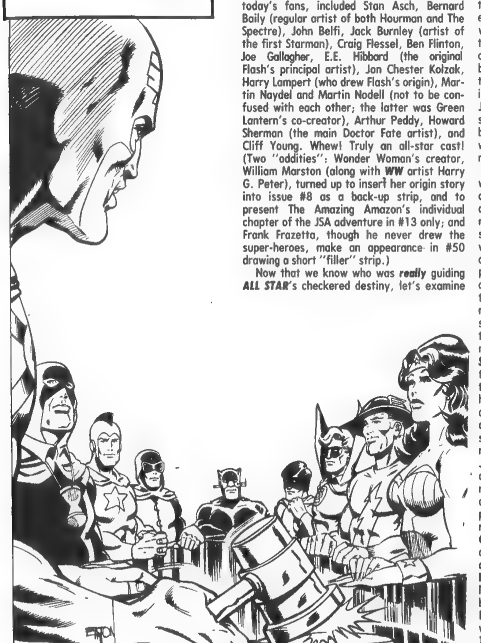
assistants was Julius Schwartz, who was to revive the JSA years later as The Justice League, and then resuscitate the original All-Star team as well in that book. The Society's scribes were the very same writers who would work under Schwartz on the 1960s revivals: Gardner Fox, creator of the original Flash and the original Hawkman; Robert Kanigher, who wrote half of the 1950s ***SHOWCASE "FLASH"*** tales, including his origin (but who is far better known as a war comics writer and the creator of ***THE METAL MEN***); and John Broome, the eventual biographer of both the modern-day Flash and Green Lantern. As for the artists, since in the early years of ***ALL-STAR***, as mentioned, each hero's chapter in the larger saga was illustrated by separate hands, the roll of ***ALL STAR*** artists is as star-studded a roster as that of the super-hero members of the team. To cite just a few of these great talents (in alphabetical order), they included: Lee Elias, Frank Giacoia, Irwin Hasen, Carmine Infantino, Joe Kubert, Sheldon Mayer, Sheldon Moldoff, Bob Oskner, Harry G. Peter, Paul Reinman, Bernard Sachs, Joe Simon & Jack Kirby, and Alex Toth. Some of the others, perhaps not as well known to today's fans, included Stan Asch, Bernard Baily (regular artist of both Hourman and The Spectre), John Belfi, Jack Burnley (artist of the first Starman), Craig Flessel, Ben Flinton, Joe Gallagher, E.E. Hibbard (the original Flash's principal artist), Jon Chester Kolzak, Harry Lampert (who drew Flash's origin), Martin Naydel and Martin Nodell (not to be confused with each other; the latter was Green Lantern's co-creator), Arthur Peddy, Howard Sherman (the main Doctor Fate artist), and Cliff Young. Whew! Truly an all-star cast! (Two "oddities": Wonder Woman's creator, William Marston (along with ***WW*** artist Harry G. Peter), turned up to insert her origin story into issue #8 as a back-up strip, and to present The Amazing Amazon's individual chapter of the JSA adventure in #13 only; and Frank Frazetta, though he never drew the super-heroes, make an appearance in #50 drawing a short "filler" strip.)

Now that we know who was ***really*** guiding ***ALL STAR***'s checkered destiny, let's examine exactly what they did to the book and its colorful cast. The purpose of The Justice Society, as its creators saw it, was to showcase the heroes appearing in the other books of the All-American stable. New characters would be given a boost by appearing in ***ALL STAR*** as well as in their "home" titles; old, worn-out characters who couldn't be saved even by that means could be dropped from the line-up; and conversely, the most popular members of the team would be those promoted to their own quarterly titles ***a la*** Superman and Batman (the original idea behind the creation of the ***ALL STAR*** book, remember). Since Gaines and Mayer didn't believe in too much of a good thing, however, those characters who were awarded their own titles would leave the JSA at the same time as their magazines' debuts to avoid over-exposure. The decision as to which new heroes would replace those departing would be a function of the same two-characters-from-each-of-the-other-four-books principle that had been used to choose the charter members of the group. These ideas can be used to explain, in real-world terms, all the changes in The Justice Society roster until, as such things as shrinking issue size and the healing of the rift between DC and All-American dictated otherwise, new methods (and apparently, new JSA rules) came into vogue.

The inhabitants of what our generation would come to call Earth-Two knew nothing of all of the behind-the-scenes machinations, although the heroes' participation in ads and next-issue announcements to the readers seemed to suggest that they had an inkling of what was going on. As mentioned, Supeman and Batman were made honorary (non-participating) members of the team from the outset (they already had their own titles to tend to), because they were "too busy" to make it to the regular meetings. Through a series of readers' polls, for which participation (erk!) the fans of the 1940s received free copies of the next issue of ***ALL-STAR*** (the forerunner of the 1960s ***FLASH*** letters page, which awarded original artwork for the best fan mail), the members to achieve honorary status (and their own books) were determined. The Flash was the first chairman of The Justice Society, mainly because he ***did*** seem to be the most popular, as well as the most likeable (and besides, his writer was the JSA writer), so when he was awarded a comic all his own, readers first saw the JSA charter rules in action. Flash passed the gavel of chairmanship to Green Lantern (the next most popular member), and the team elected Johnny Thunder, who also appeared in ***FLASH COMICS***, to replace Flash as a member. Then, almost immediately, when Green Lantern won a comic bearing his name, and simultaneously Hourman retired, GL conferred the mantle of leadership on Hawkman, and his team membership on fellow ***ALL-AMERICAN*** character Doctor Mid-Nite, while the Man of the Hour was replaced by another hero from ***ADVENTURE***'s pages, Starman.

These traditions began to break down

This Joe Staton/Bob Layton drawing is a rejected splash from one of the *ALL-STAR* revival issues, and was originally printed as an *Original Art Gallery* cover.



character © 1981 DC Comics

somewhat when a new anthology comic was launched bearing the title ***SENSATION COMICS***. its main character was Wonder Woman, and, although the all-male JSA seemed hesitant to break up their "lodge-night" atmosphere by including a female in the ranks, it seemed only fair to offer the Amazing Amazon some sort of position with the group. Adherence to the rules solved the Justice Society's problem for them, though, as Wonder Woman proved to be so popular that she was ***immediately*** awarded her own title—none of this reader-poll nonsense for her—and thus became both a member and a non-participating honorary member at the same time. Feeling perhaps that her own popularity had worked against her and denied her the chance to appear with the team, the JSA voted her their secretary, which meant that although only rarely would she have her own chapter or assignment (until the later years when the group was hard-up for surviving super-doers to fill the roster), she would nonetheless appear in each issue, dutifully taking minutes in Amazon shorthand. Sigh. Such was the state of the art in Women's Liberation in the 1940s. In the "real world," women were filling the jobs of men in civilian life while the boys were called to war; in the comics, Wonder Woman either played secretary or failed to appear with the JSA at all, however ludicrous it appeared to have the team's most physically-powerful member (a fact that none of the male members had the bad taste to mention) blow the others a kiss for good luck as they sallied forth to thrash the baddies without her.

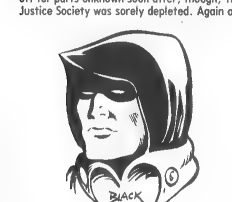
Wonder Woman did not join the JSA to replace a departing member, but as if to balance this, members began to depart without being replaced. Actually, of course, this was due to the new smaller size of ***ALL STAR*** which no longer allowed room for so many individual-member story chapters, and due to the "retirements" (as mysteriously unexplained as Hourman's) of several superheroes. Doctor Fate and The Sandman handed in their resignations unseen in between issues, leaving the group short a member from both ***MORE FUN*** and ***ADVENTURE***. They didn't really quit outright, naturally—once a JSA member, always a JSA member—but they were gone all the same. When Starman and The Spectre took off for parts unknown soon after, though, The Justice Society was sorely depleted. Again attempting to make things up to ***SENSATION COMICS*** for being the Johnny-come-lately of the anthologies, The JSA chose temporary replacements for these two heroes from the pages of Wonder Woman's original home ground title—these being Wildcat and Mister Terrific. Like WW's secretaryship, however, this proved to be a mere sop, and the new duo were bounced after a single adventure to have their placed taken by a returning Flash and Green Lantern, who "gave up" their honorary memberships to return to active participation. Again, this seeming violation of established regulation and tradition was occasioned by the fact that there just weren't that many superheroes running around by that time, and even the ones who had their own books—in the All-American group at least—could use the good P.R. provided by a second home with the JSA. Mister Terrific went The Red Tornado route, remaining an unseen honorary member until he was reactivated in the 1960s, but Wildcat remained on stand-by status and turned up once more, that time as a stand-in for The Atom.

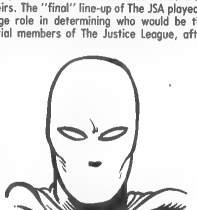
By that time, the system of choosing members from the anthologies had gone by the boards completely, as the anthologies themselves became funny-animal hangouts, war books, westerns, and what-not. When Starman and The Spectre left, there were no more JSA members from ***ADVENTURE*** or ***MORE FUN***, and when the dust cleared after the return of the former honorary members, the team was left with three stars each from ***FLASH*** (Flash, Hawkman, and Johnny Thunder) and ***ALL-AMERICAN*** (GL, The Atom, and Doctor Mid-Nite), plus Wonder Woman representing ***SENSATION***. Only one more change would overtake the group during the Golden Age. Johnny Thunder had begun to feature a new female costumed character, The Black Canary, as a co-star in his ***FLASH*** strip, and he was rewarded for his pains by being ousted from strip, book, and comics altogether by the attractive newcomer. Naturally, she took his spot in The Justice Society as well, although it took her a few guest-star appearances to establish herself therein.

This then was the roster when the dual fates of poor sales and, in Earth-Two terms, retirement, overtook the Justice Society as a whole, and their book became ***ALL-STAR WESTERN*** with its 58th issue. The "true" story of the group's temporary demise, like the facts behind its origin, had to wait a few decades to be revealed. It was only in their last outing in ***ADVENTURE COMICS***, in which the JSA strip had been relocated in 1978 following the cancellation of the revived ***ALL-STAR***, that we learned how their world's versions of Senator McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Commission had brought about the disbanding of comics' first and mightiest team.

We rush ahead of ourselves, however. The history of The Justice Society seemed to run in cycles of a dozen years each. For 12 years they held forth in ***ALL STAR COMICS***, for another decade-plus-two-years they languished in limbo, for yet another twelve years they were content to appear once a year as guest-stars in the comic of their Earth-One "descendants," The Justice League of America, before finally being given a title of their own once more. Alas, thanks to the infamous "DC Implosion" of Summer of 1978 which caused the abrupt cancellation of all marginally-selling DC comics, the new version of ***ALL STAR*** did not last a dozen years, but only from issues #58 (the title resumed the original's numbering sequence) to #74. The JSA thereupon moved to ***AVENTURE COMICS***, which was then (as in the 1940s) an anthology book, for a brief time before being ousted from that haven by their old nemesis, a shrinking page-count.

For new times, new rules and customs must be adopted. The JSA who guested in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA*** and who returned in the second series of ***ALL-STAR*** had rewritten their constitution radically. With all the past members coming out of retirement almost simultaneously, The JSA was forced to adopt a drawing-straws method of determining which members would attend meeting how often, and who would go on which case. This they did by taking a leaf from The Justice League's book, as The JLA had borrowed whole from theirs. The "final" line-up of The JSA played a large role in determining who would be the initial members of The Justice League, after all.





Character ©1987 DC Comics

C. MEMBERSHIP:

And now, a complete list, in order of their appearance in the origin story for charter members, and in the order of their appearance for later members, of the roster of The Justice Society, with a few appropriate comments for each entry. Please note, historians: the total of 23 past and present members ***does*** make the JSA larger than any other team in comics, except for The Legion of Super-Heroes, although several other groups (notably The JLA, The X-Men, The Teen Titans, and especially The Avengers—only one member short as of this writing) are closing fast on the record.

character ©1987 DC Comics

1. BATMAN (Bruce Wayne, financier, playboy, later Police Commissioner of Gotham City)
The Batman was a charter member of The Justice Society, as established in ***DC SPECIAL #29***, but was only mentioned as an honorary member and does not appear in ***ALL STAR #3***. He made a cameo appearance in ***ALL STAR #7***, was mentioned again in #10, and appeared as a substitute for The Atom in ***#36***. During The JSA's inactive decade of the 1950s he continued to fight crime with his partner Robin until his marriage to the former Catwoman, Selina Kyle, in 1955, after which he went into semi-retirement. As Bruce Wayne, he succeeded James W. Gordon as Police Commissioner of his home base, Gotham City. When his wife was killed in 1977, Batman retired completely, having appeared with The JSA during the 1960s and 1970s only in a cameo in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE #82***, and in full action (with Robin) in ***JLA #135-6***. In ***ADVENTURE COMICS #462***, he became the first JSA member to die in action. Like his Earth-One counterpart, Batman had no super-powers, but developed his various skills of criminology and unarmed combat through constant training.

2. THE FLASH (Jay Garrick, research scientist)
The Flash was a charter member of The Justice Society, as established in ***DC SPECIAL #29***, and was named the first chairman of the group at their first meeting in ***ALL STAR #3***. He became an honorary member and ceased active participation in the group in ***ALL STAR #6***, after which Green Lantern succeeded him as chairman, and Johnny Thunder replaced him as a member. He made cameo appearances in #7 and #10, before returning to active membership in #24, replacing The Spectre after a fill-in by Wildcat. Flash continued with the team until they disbanded following ***ALL STAR #57***, and was the first to resume action years later in ***FLASH #123***. He next appeared in ***FLASH #129*** and ***137***, and in the latter was responsible for the return of his fellow members from retirement. During his "retired years," he married Joan Williams, the sole confidante of his secret identity (except for his fellow members) until his decision to reveal his dual role to the world in ***FLASH SPECTACULAR*** (1978, ***DC SPECIAL SERIES #11***). He heads his own research firm in his hometown of Keystone City. Flash has the power of superspeed, gained when he accidentally breathed the chemical fumes of a substance called "hard water."

character ©1987 DC Comics

3. GREEN LANTERN (Alan Scott, engineer, radio announcer, President of Gotham Broadcasting Corporation, now an employee of Keystone Research)
The Green Lantern was a charter member of The Justice Society, as established in ***DC SPECIAL #29*** and was in attendance at their first meeting in ***ALL STAR #3***. He became the group's second chairman, succeeding The Flash, in #7; also in that issue, he became an honorary member and ceased active participation in the group, after which Hawkman replaced him as chairman, and Doctor Mid-Nite succeeded to his membership. He made a cameo appearance in #10, then returned to active membership in #24, replacing Starman after a fill-in by Mr. Terrific. Green Lantern continued with the team until they disbanded following ***ALL STAR #57***. His companion, cab-driver Doiby Dickles, also appeared in ***ALL STAR***, notably in #7 and #33; Doiby became Alan Scott's chauffeur during GL's "retirement" years until Doiby's marriage and emigration to the planet Myrg in ***GREEN LANTERN #45*** (second series) in 1966. Like Batman, GL is a resident of Gotham City, where he rose to the presidency of the Gotham Broadcasting Corporation—a position he held until the company was forced to declare bankruptcy in 1977, whereupon he joined the staff of Jay (Flash) Garrick's research firm under his original profession as an engineer. Green Lantern gains his powers from the mystic gem of his Power Ring which, like the science-based ring of his Earth-One namesake, can do almost anything—limited only by the user's will power focused through the ring. The original GL was said to be "immune to metals"; later, to have power over everything but non-metals; and finally, to be unable to affect objects made of wood.

4. DOCTOR FATE (Kent Nelson, archaeologist, physician, mystic)
Doctor Fate was also a charter member of The Justice Society, as established in ***DC SPECIAL #29*** and was in attendance at their first meeting in ***ALL STAR #3***. He was absent from only one meeting during his tenure with

the group, in #13, before he departed on an extended leave-of-absence after #21, and no replacement was named for him. He next appeared with the team upon their revival in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE* #21**, coincidentally the same issue number with which he departed ***ALL STAR.*** During his retirement, he married Inza Cramer, and the couple live in his headquarters near Salem, Massachusetts. Doctor Fate gained his mystical abilities and paraphernalia when, as a child, he became the pupil of a mystic entity from another world which eventuolly merged with the young Kent Nelson to create the being now known as Doctor Fate—as explained fully for the first time in ***SECRET ORIGINS OF SUPER-HEROES*** (1978) **(*DC SPECIAL SERIES* #10).** During his initial career, as Kent Nelson, he followed in his father's footsteps as an archaeologist, then later dabbled in medicine. At present he seems to spend most of his time in his Fate identity. After ***ALL STAR* #7**, his full-face golden helmet was changed to a half-mask which reveals his lower features, and his powers were greatly diminished (it is this author's theory that, in an as-yet-untold tale, Kent Nelson and the entity that gave him his powers parted for a time, leaving Nelson with only a fraction of his full powers and necessitating the half-mask so that the then-fully-human sorcerer could properly breathe). Upon his revival in ***JLA* #21**, his full powers and original mask were restored. Doctor Fate's sole weakness is said to be an attack which affects his lungs.

5. HOURMAN (Rex "Tick-Tock" Tyler, chemist, business executive)
Hourman, whose name was originally rendered "The Hour-Man," was a charter member of The Justice Society, as was established in ***DC SPECIAL* #29** and was in attendance at their first meeting in ***ALL STAR* #3.** His strip in ***ADVENTURE COMICS*** once boasted the longest title of any single-hero strip: ***"Presenting 'Tick-Tock' Tyler as the Man of the Hour—the Hour-Man—with Minute-Man Martin and the Minute Men of America."*** He departed the team on an extended leave of absence in **#7**, and Starman was named as his replacement. He did not return to active membership until his appearance in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE* #21.** He and Doctor Fate teamed up in ***SHOWCASE* #55-6**, in the latter of which he became engaged to actress Wendi Harris. Hourman's costume features an hourglass worn around his neck, which he uses to keep track of his superpowers of strength and endurance given him through the Miracle pills he invented, which last precisely one hour.

6. THE SANDMAN (Wesley Dodds, society playboy)
The Sandman was a charter member of The Justice Society, as established in ***DC SPECIAL* #29** and was in attendance at their first meeting in ***ALL STAR* #3.** In his early appearances he wore a suit, slouch hat, and gas mask, and was aided by his girlfriend/confidante, Dian Belmont, a district attorney's daughter. Beginning in ***ALL STAR* #10**, he adopted a purple-and-golden costume and a boy partner, Sandy, who aided him in ***ALL STAR* #14, 15,** and **19.** He left the team, together with Doctor Fate, after #21, and no replacement was named for him. When he made his reappearance in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE* #46**, he had returned to his original garb and briefly experimented with an arsenal of gimmick-weapons involving his sand motif before returning to his tried-and-true methods of yesteryear. Sandy was revealed to have been the victim of a tragic experiment that tranformed him into a creature—until he was cured in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE* #113.** The Sandman possesses no true super-powers, only athletics and use of his gas-gun and wirepoon weapons.

7. THE ATOM (Al Pratt, college student, later a college professor)
The Atom was a charter member of the Justice Society, as established in ***DC SPECIAL* #29** and is in attendance at their first meeting in ***ALL STAR* #3.** Thereafter, he was second only to Hawkman in number of meetings attended, having missed only two before the team disbanded following ***ALL STAR* #57.** In #27, he was replaced by Wildcat, and in #36 by Batman. He next appeared with the group in ***FLASH* #137**, and was part of the revived team in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE* #21.** In his early career, The Atom was merely a five-foot-tall youth who trained to develop extraordinary strength, and his costume consisted of a blue mask which covered his entire face, a yellow shirt open nearly to the waist in a "V" design, and short brown breeches and matching wristbands, plus a blue cape which is attached to the head-mask. Beginning in ***ALL STAR* #42**, his costume changed to include a crested helmet (somewhat resembling Starman's) which revealed his lower facial features, a regular tunic with an atomic-symbol emblem, and full-length yellow leggings beneath blue trunks. He also gained the power of superstrength to the extent of that of Wonder Woman, the origin of which is never explained in ***ALL STAR*** and may be the subject of a future "untold" story. Upon his return after retirement, he retained the later costume but no longer possessed his super-strength. A Professor at Calvin College, his alma matter in his home town of Calvin City, The Atom has added a vehicle, the Atomobile, and an atomic vibrator (used for travelling between alternate Earths) to his arsenal, and in ***DC COMICS PRESENTS* #30**, is revealed to be married after long years of bachelorhood. His wife's name is Mary. Whether she is his 1940s girlfriend, Mary James, is not known.

8. HAWKMAN (Carter Hall, socialite, adventurer, collector of antique weapons)
Hawkman, also called The Hawk in his early adventures, was a charter member of The Justice Society as established in ***DC SPECIAL* #29**, and he was in attendance at their first meeting in ***ALL STAR* #3.** He became the group's third chairman, succeeding Green Lan-

tern in #8, and might have become the next member to graduate to honorary status (and his own title) had not economic circumstances dictated otherwise (educated speculation has it that The Spectre would have replaced him as chairman). As it was, he remained chairman until the group disbanded after ***ALL STAR #57***, being the only member never to miss a meeting from the inception of the team, and retains the chairmanship today when in attendance (his first absenteeism occurred in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE #46***; his first missed issue of ***ALL STAR, #60***). Beginning in ***ALL STAR #42***, his hawk's-head helmet (similar in design to that of the Earth-One Hawkman) gives way to a simpler yellow cowl with a red hawk emblem, and ***ALL STAR #72*** he acquires a new helmet with an Egyptian motif reflecting his origins. Hawkman, who gains the power of flight from his special wings and anti-gravity belt of Nth metal (also called Ninth metal) and who also uses his collection of ancient weapons in combat, is the reincarnation of the Egyptian prince Khufu. During the retirement years, he married his long-time girlfriend Shiera Sanders, alias Hawkgirl, and began to dabble in archaeology like his Earth-One counterpart.

9. THE SPECTRE (Jim Corrigan, Gateway City police detective)
The Spectre was a charter member of The Justice Society, as established in ***DC SPECIAL #29***, and was in attendance at their first meeting in ***ALL STAR #3***. Being a ghost, he was the only member who did not join the Armed Services with America's entrance into World War II in ***ALL STAR #11*** (when the group took on the name "The Justice Battalion" for the duration), being content to combat spies on the home front. (Later, in ***MORE FUN***, he does join the Army as Jim Corrigan). He leaves the team after ***ALL STAR #23***, to be replaced by the returning Flash after a fill-in by Wildcat. He returned to action in ***SHOWCASE #60*** and reappeared with the JSA in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE #46***. The Spectre possesses powers bordering on omnipotence, which he gained after the death of his mortal self, Jim Corrigan (at the hands of gangsters), and his subsequently having been given the ability to walk the Earth in pursuit of evil. He eventually was able to reincarnate Corrigan and to split his ghostly self off from the mortal police detective when duty should call. Since his return in the 1960s, The Spectre has appeared to truly "die" several times, but he has always returned when needed. His most recent appearances in ***ADVENTURE, BRAVE AND BOLD*** (with the Earth-One Batman), and ***GHOSTS*** may be attributable to the heretofore unsuspected existence of an Earth-One counterpart of The Spectre (other than the decidedly similar Deadman).

10. SUPERMAN (Clark Kent, newspaper reporter, now editor of the Metropolis Daily Star)
Superman was a charter member of The Justice Society, as established in ***DC SPECIAL #29***, but was only mentioned as an honorary member and did not appear in ***ALL STAR #3***. He made a cameo appearance in ***ALL STAR #7***, was mentioned again in #10, and appeared as a substitute for Johnny Thunder in #36. During the JSA's inactive decade of the 1950s, he disappeared for a time (see the events of ***ACTION COMICS #484***), and as Clark Kent, married fellow reporter Lois Lane (see the ***"Mr. and Mrs. Superman"*** series in ***SUPERMAN*** and ***SUPERMAN FAMILY*** for untold tales of the 1950s) and became editor-in-chief of The Daily Star (the Earth-Two version of The Daily Planet), succeeding George Taylor. In the 1960s, he appeared with the JSA in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE #73-4***, and in the 1970s in ***JLA #82-3, 91-2, 107-8***, and in the revived ***ALL STAR***, finally leaving the team to be replaced by his cousin Power Girl. Superman possesses various powers due to his heritage as one of the only two survivors of the destroyed planet Krypton (the other is Power Girl); although his abilities are not as great as those of the Earth-One Superman, his status as the JSA's strongest member is unchallenged and only The Spectre is represented as a more powerful member overall.

11. JOHNNY THUNDER (sailor, would-be detective and adventurer, temporary ruler of Badhnisia)
Johnny Thunder first appeared with The Justice Society in ***ALL STAR #3***, and is also a guest at their meeting in #4 and #5, before being elected to membership as The Flash's replacement in #6. A non-costumed character with limitless enthusiasm but somewhat limited common sense, the calamity-prone Johnny had the power to command a magical servant known as The Thunderbolt, who could accomplish almost anything. This ability of Johnny's was a heritage of his having been born at a precise mystically-determined moment in the Zodiacal calendar. The shaman of the nation of Badhnisia, who had kidnapped Johnny and had determined his power-to-be (which comes from his pronouncing the phrase "Cei-U") in his infancy, began magically interfering with his abilities after a few years, with the result that Johnny's Thunderbolt failed to appear after ***ALL STAR #33***. Johnny himself left the JSA after ***ALL STAR #39*** (having missed only one meeting—#36—in which Superman replaced him), with The Black Canary being named his replacement two issues later. During the 1950s, the now-powerless Johnny was again kidnapped to Badhnisia, where he replaced the late ruler of that country for a time, unwillingly, under the regency of the evil shaman. Rescued from his fate by Superman and Lois Kent (***SUPERMAN FAMILY #204***), Johnny's Thunderbolt-commanding powers returned, and he abdicated in favor of an elected Badhnisian government,

reappearing with The JSA in ***FLASH #137*** and rejoining them as a full member in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE #37-8***. His early adventures featured his girlfriend, Daisy Darling; his adopted daughter, Peachy Pet, a character as comical as Johnny himself, appeared with the other members' girlfriends in ***ALL STAR #15***.

12. THE RED TORNADO (Mrs. "Ma" Hunkle, housewife, storekeeper)
The Red Tornado made her first and only appearance with The Justice Society in ***ALL STAR #3***, as a guest at their first meeting. She was later voted an honorary membership, as revealed in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE #64***. She originally appeared in the ***"Scribbly"*** strip in ***ALL-AMERICAN COMICS***, in which brawny Ma Hunkle (also spelled Hunkel) first donned long woolies and cooking-pot helmet to combat gangsters in #20, and was joined by boy cartoonist Scribbly's kid brother and sister, Sisty and Dinky, as the costumed Cyclone Kids, in #24. She was a parody of her fellow "mystery men," especially of her role model, Green Lantern, the star of ***ALL-AMERICAN***. It should be noted that The Red Tornado's true gender was not known to the general public, who mistakenly assumed her to be a man, or even, at one point, a gorilla.

13. STARMAN (Ted Knight, financier, socialite, amateur astronomer)
Starman joined The Justice Society in ***ALL STAR #8***, replacing Hourman, who had requested a leave of absence. He remained with the group until ***ALL STAR #23***, after which he was replaced by the returning Green Lantern after a fill-in by Mister Terrific. His return to action comes in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE #29***; his team-ups with Black Canary (and Wildcat) in ***THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD #61-2*** revealed that he remained a bachelor, having devoted most of his time and considerable wealth to his astronomy hobby. It was that interest which led him to create the Gravity Rod which gave him his powers of flight and gravity control. During the retirement years, he improved his weapon into a Cosmic Rod capable of feats almost equal to those of Green Lantern's Power Ring. Now in semi-retirement once more, his place in The JSA was taken by The Star-Spangled Kid, whom he gifted with a duplicate of The Cosmic Rod, and which his successor has since reworked into the more compact and powerful Cosmic Converter Belt.

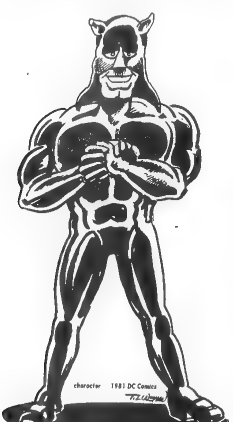
14. DOCTOR MID-NITE (Dr. Charles McNider, physician, surgeon, author)
Doctor Mid-Nite joined The Justice Society in ***ALL STAR #8***, replacing Green Lantern, who became an honorary member. Together with his mascot Hooty (an owl), Mid-Nite proved invaluable to the team on his first case, and

remained with the group until it disbanded following ***ALL STAR #57***. He came out of retirement in ***FLASH #137***, and returned to action with The JSA in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE #29***. Like The Sandman, this non-super-powered crusader experimented with an array of gimmick-weapons in ***JLA #46-7***, but returned to his reliance on his patented Blackout Bomb, which released a smoke screen to blind his foes. The Man of Mid-Nite, who also shared with Batman the ***nom de guerre*** of "The Caped Crusader," was blinded by gangsters in his origin story, but invented special lenses which enabled him to recover his vision and also to see in the dark. He only used those in his costumed identity, posing as the blind Dr. McNider, physician-turned-mystery-writer, his ruse unsuspected even by his assistant Myra Mason. He nevertheless brought his medical knowledge to use in a number of JSA cases, and returned to private practice (presumably as a consultant only) upon his reactivation in the 1960s. According to the revived ***ALL STAR*** series, Dr. Mid-Nite actually "sees" the infra-red heat patterns of persons and objects, not the objects themselves, which perhaps explains his ability to fight crime and concurrent reluctance to return to the practice of surgery, discarding his blind man's pose. Despite his "handicap," he followed his fellow members into the Army in ***ALL STAR #11***, as a special medical consultant.

15. WONDER WOMAN (Diana Prince, Army nurse, Army intelligence officer)
Wonder Woman joined The Justice Society in ***ALL STAR #11***, as the group became known as The Justice Battalion during World War II. Her first appearance in ***ALL STAR***, however, came in #8, when her origin story (and first appearance in a comic) appeared as a back-up feature following the regular JSA adventure. She was voted an honorary member and permanent secretary to the group in #13, in which she served as a substitute for the absent Doctor Fate. (She first became secretary in #12.) After that, she appeared, albeit in minor and inactive roles, at every meeting until ***ALL STAR #38***, when she began to act as a full fighting member of the team—a role she enjoyed until The JSA disbanded following ***ALL***

STAR #57. Wonder Woman had the distinction of sharing at least one war-time adventure with her JSA comrades which was not chronicled in ***ALL STAR***: she was joined in battle by Starman, Sandman, Mister Terrific, The Atom, and Johnny Thunder in ***WONDER WOMAN #231-2***. (That story necessitates another untold story by way of explanation, since the heroes named are not known to be concurrent members.) Her adventure in ***WONDER WOMAN #241*** was narrated by The Spectre, #239 saw her teamed with The Flash, and in #242, both The Spectre and Doctor Fate appeared to persuade Wonder Woman's mother, Queen Hippolyte, not to recall The Amazon Princess to Paradise Island with the declaration of peace in 1945. Thus, Wonder Woman remained on active super-heroine throughout the 1950s, apparently never culminating her relationship with Colonel Steve Trevor (her wartime boyfriend), nor rising in rank commensurate with what any military man or woman would have to accede to (or be discharged). She appeared with The JSA in ***FLASH #137***, and returned to membership in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE #55***.

16. WILDCAT (Ted Grant, champion boxer, fight trainer)
Wildcat joined The Justice Society in ***ALL STAR #24***, wherein he served as a temporary replacement for The Spectre, who is subsequently replaced by the returning Flash. He returned in ***ALL STAR #27***, as a substitute for The Atom. He did not appear as a JSA member again until he emerged from retirement in ***THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD #62*** to fight alongside Starman and Black Canary. He was aided by The Spectre in ***THE SPECTRE #3***. He rejoined the team as a regular member in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE #46***, and continued with the group until his second retirement from super-herodom in ***ADVENTURE #464***. Taking his inspiration from Green Lantern, Wildcat first assumed his costumed identity in order to clear himself of a faked murder charge, then continued his new career armed only with his fighting skills and his unique motorcycle. After leaving the ring as undefeated World Heavyweight Champion, he opened his own gym and began training young fighters and other athletes. Falling on hard times, he gave up his gym to serve The JSA full-time as Wildcat, but he eventually left the group once more to reopen the facility. Like The Spectre, Wildcat appears to have an Earth-One counterpart unaffiliated with any super-team, who has teamed with Batman several times in ***THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD***, and who, unlike most of the other Earth-One heroes, is roughly the same chronological age as his double. Wildcat's hometown and accustomed stomping grounds is Knickerbocker City.



17. MISTER TERRIFIC (Terry Sloan, financier, athlete)
Mister Terrific joined The Justice Society ***ALL STAR #24***, wherein he served as a temporary replacement for Starman, who was subsequently replaced by the returning Green Lantern. He did not appear again as a JSA member (not counting his appearance in ***WONDER WOMAN #231-2***) until he rejoined the group in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE #37***. He thereafter attended meetings on several occasions before going into semi-retirement after ***JUSTICE LEAGUE #102***. Dubbed "The Man of 1000 Talents" because of his genius intellect and countless athletic accomplishments, Mister Terrific first took on his costumed identity to seek a new challenge in life and to avoid boredom. Also known as "the Defender of Fair Play " (the motto emblazoned on his costume's tunic), this non-super-powered hero emerged from inactivity a second time in

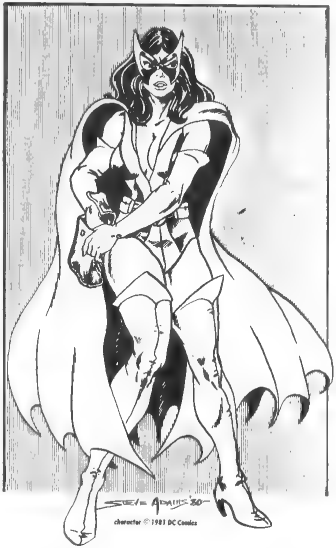
ADVENTURE #465, only to become the second JSA member to die in action, in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE #171***.

18. THE BLACK CANARY (Dinah Drake Lance, police academy graduate, florist)
Black Canary first appeared with The Justice Society in ***ALL STAR #38***, when she is summoned by Johnny Thunder (whose strip and adventures she had been sharing in ***FLASH COMICS***) to aid The JSA members who had been slain by a madman impersonating historical villains. Thanks to Black Canary's efforts, The JSA were saved by Wonder Woman's purple healing ray. As a reward, Black Canary was allowed to accompany the group on its two succeeding cases in ***ALL STAR #39*** and ***#40***. After she and The Harlequin saved the team from the Injustice Society, she was made a full member in ***ALL STAR #41***. She retained her place until the team disbanded following ***ALL STAR #57***. During the JSA's inactive years, she married longtime beau Larry Lance, a private investigator, and continued to operate a florist shop. Black Canary returned to action in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE #21***, and also teamed with Starman (and Wildcat) in ***THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD #61-2***. Trained to become a police officer by her father (whose greatest wish was that she follow in her footsteps), she was rejected from the police academy because of sexual bias. After her father's death, she turned to fighting crime using martial arts skills and gimmicks contained in the special amulet she wore as The Black Canary. At first she wore an eye-mask and preyed on crooks by stealing their loot, and thus was hunted herself by the law. But after some shared cases with Johnny Thunder, she kept only her blonde wig (her real hair is dark blue-black) to disguise her true identity, and she became a legitimate super-heroine, as seen in ***SECRET ORIGINS OF SUPER-HEROES*** (1978) (***DC SPECIAL SERIES #10***). Following the death of her husband in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE #74***, Black Canary journeyed to Earth-One and joined The Justice League. She now runs the Pretty Bird Flower Shoppe in Star City, and shares her life with former JLA member Green Arrow. Added to her abilities since her interdimensional exodus is a sonic scream, a power gained through exposure to the mystic energy-blast which caused the death of Larry Lance.

19. ROBIN (Richard Grayson, political ambassador, lawyer, business executive)
Robin, long the junior partner of Batman, was mentioned at the first meeting of The Justice Society in ***ALL STAR #3***, but did not join the group until he reached his majority in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE #55***. He thereafter attended meetings on a semi-regular basis, occupied as he was with substituting in Gotham City for the semi-retired Batman and with his very busy personal life as a member of the law firm of Cranston, Wayne, and Grayson, an executive of Bruce Wayne's financial holding, and a United States ambassador. Discarding his "boy wonder" costume of his early career, he first adopted a modified Batman-like garb before switching to a more streamlined uniform which incorporates the colors of his original outfit. After the death of his mentor, Robin has remained on recall status with The JSA, leaving the responsibilities of full-time active membership to Batman's daughter, The Huntress: ··

20. THE RED TORNADO II (John Smith)
The new Red Tornado first appeared and joined The Justice Society in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE #64***. He is not related to the original Red Tornado, although he originally believed himself to be the same character. He is an android, rather, an artificial human constructed by the evil scientist T.O. Morrow as part of a plot to destroy his super-hero enemies. Originally faceless behind his scarlet mask, The Red Tornado now possesses features resembling those fashioned for his costumed self, in his civilian identity as John Smith. The Red Tornado possesses the power to turn portions of his anatomy into a whirlwind subject to his control, which serves both as his means of travel and of combat. His history, like that of The JSA itself, has been one of death and rebirth. Having sacrificed himself to save the world in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE #102***, he found himself not destroyed but instead transferred from Earth-Two to Earth-One, where, like Black Canary before him, he joined The Justice League. In ***JUSTICE LEAGUE #129*** he seemed to perish a second time, but again was revived. Today he continued as a JLA member, and in his John Smith persona shares the companionship of his girlfriend, social worker Kathy Sutton, and that of his ward Traya, an orphaned child.

21. THE STAR-SPANGLED KID (Sylvester Pemberton)
The Star-Spangled Kid was originally a member of another super-team, The Seven Soldiers of Victory, until all members of that group were hurled into past time-periods in the aftermath of their final battle following ***LEADING COMICS #14***. Having been rescued and returned to the present along with his team-mates in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE #102***, he spent some time adjusting to the new era in which he found himself (having spent over 20 years in limbo). The Star-Spangled Kid had been a non-super-powered hero featured in ***STAR SPANGLED COMICS***, but when his adult



partner, Stripesy, decided to retire from costumed adventuredom, the Kid joined The Justice Society as a replacement for Starman, who lent him his powerful Cosmic Rod. He later rebuilt the Rod into the more powerful Cosmic Converter Belt, but took a leave-of-absence from The JSA in ***ALL STAR #71*** in order to recapture his former life as Sylvester Pemberton, heir to a sizeable fortune. He first appeared with The JSA in ***ALL STAR #58***, the first in the revived series, and was made an official member of the team in ***#64***.

22. *POWER GIRL* (Karen Starr, born Kara Zor-L, computer scientist)
Power Girl first appeared in ***ALL STAR #58***, the first of the revived JSA series, and became an official member of The Justice Society in ***ALL STAR #64***. As revealed in those issues and in ***SHOWCASE #97-9***, she is the cousin of Superman (the daughter of his father's brother, the Kryptonian scientist Zor-L). Like her Earth-One counterpart, Supergirl, she too was saved from the final destruction of Krypton by being rocketed to Earth; unlike Supergirl, the reason for her being younger than Superman is different. Power Girl is actually roughly the same age as her cousin but she came to Earth in a slower craft, which preserved her youth while feeding her both educational data and artificial memories of her adolescent years. Her powers are equal to those of the Earth-Two Superman, the official replacement as a JSA member of whom she becomes. The Amazon presence of fellow member Wonder Woman was used to give her the knowledge of a computer software specialist which she used to establish her secret identity as Karen Starr, a role known only to her fellow members and to her friend, reporter Andrew Vinson.

23. *THE HUNTRESS* (Helena Wayne, lawyer)
The Huntress first appeared in ***DC SUPER-STARS #17***, in which her origin was revealed, and she began to appear with The Justice Society in ***ALL STAR #72***. The daughter of Batman and The Catwoman, she took up her costume and miniature crossbow to avenge her mother's death, just as her own father had become The Caped Crusader to avenge his own parents. She is currently the only Earth-Two-based JSA member to have her own regular strip, which appears in the pages of ***WONDER WOMAN***. She previously enjoyed a solo feature in ***BATMAN FAMILY/DETECTIVE***.

D. CASEBOOK

As an added special feature, here is a quick run-down of The Justice Society's Golden Age exploits in ***ALL STAR #3-57***, pointing out some of the highlights of their association.

ALL STAR #3

This was the historic first meeting of The JSA, at which we first could view their secret meeting rooms. Over the years, The JSA headquarters would move from New York (#3-33) to Gotham City (#34-43), to Civic City (#45-57), and back to Gotham City again (#58-74), although we readers would only once actually have seen the team vacate a past HQ, in #46 (which may have been a belated account of the move from Gotham to Civic City, or a separate move from one building to another within Civic City).

ALL STAR #4

After having been recruited by the F.B.I. chief during the meeting in #3, The JSA met with him and set out on their first mission—to smash the activities of several Fifth Columnist spy groups.

ALL STAR #5

A mysterious crimelord called Mister X unites the underworld in an attempt to destroy the individual JSA members.

ALL STAR #6

As an initiation stunt, The JSA sends Johnny Thunder after a make-believe criminal—which doesn't deter him from getting mixed up with some real crooks and needing the aid of the various members along the way.

ALL STAR #7

With Flash granted an honorary membership, GL takes over as chairman and proposes that The Society attempt to raise $1,000,000 for war orphans. Each of the others manages to come up with $100,000, but Johnny Thunder needs the help of honorary members Superman, Batman, and Flash to come up with the last $300,000.

ALL STAR #8

A very special issue. Not only do Starman and Doctor Mid-Nite debut as new members (combatting the evil scientist Dr. Elba), replacing GL and Hourman; not only does Wonder Woman's origin story appear as a back-up strip; but The JSA "appears" as guest-stars in the ***"Hop Harrigan"*** text-feature, represented by the honorary members Superman, Batman, Flash, and Green Lantern—plus Doctor Mid-Nite, Hawkman, and others not named. Technically, this constitutes an appearance by the seldom-seen World's Finest duo in ***ALL STAR***.

ALL STAR #9

What they did for America in #4, the JSA does for various Latin American nations here, smashing several secret spy rings. The F.B.I. chief, again the instigator of their mission, is voted an "Associate Member" of The JSA at this time.

ALL STAR #10

Flash and Green Lantern return to mind the store while the regular members time-travel into the future to secure a formula that will protect America from bombing attack by the Axis powers.

ALL STAR #11

The United States officially enters the war, and the patriotic Justice Society members enlist in the army in their secret identities, with a new wrinkle. Doctor Mid-Nite becomes a medical corps officer despite his supposed blindness; Johnny Thunder—who just has to be different—joins the Navy instead; and The Spectre, being a ghost and technically dead, remains on the home front. This conveniently leaves a chapter unoccupied in the issue, which is filled by guest-star Wonder Woman—who meets and exchanges secret identities with Hawkman and Shiera (Hawkgirl) in the first segment. The Justice Society becomes The Justice Battalion in the denouement (only for the duration, of course) and Wonder Woman becomes a member.

ALL STAR #12

The Justice Society takes on The Black Dragon Society, a Japanese spy cadre, and secretary Wonder Woman sits this one out.

ALL STAR #13

Hitler plans to defeat The JSA by capturing the members and rocketing them into space. Doctor Fate misses this meeting, which leaves space for Wonder Woman to solo once more. Each member ends up on a different planet of the solar system, where they overcome menaces, learn a bit of super-science to be used against the Nazis, and manage to return to Earth unharmed.

ALL STAR #14

Hawkman (who, it should be noted, has taught his fellow members to understand bird language, enabling The JSA to send messages via his feathered allies) comes up with some concentrated food capsules, with which the members feed starving underground patriot groups in occupied European countries.

ALL STAR #15

The first appearance of The JSA's arch-foe, Brain Wave, is also the occasion of the disappearance of our heroes. When nobody else turns up for a scheduled meeting, Wonder Woman enlists the aid of the members' girlfriends (and Peachy Pet) who garb themselves in imitations of the JSA heroes' costumes and set out in search of the villain. Writer Fox seemed to ignore the fact that, unlike his heroes Flash and Hawkman, not all the other JSA members had entrusted their secret identities to their lady friends. (On the other hand, a similar reunion took place in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE #65***, and the presence of Jean Loring, who did not then know that Ray Palmer was The Atom, was neatly explained away.) Present for the occasion are: Shiera (Hawkgirl) Sanders, Doris Lee (Starman's girl), Mary James (Atom's girl), Myra Mason (Doctor Mid-Nite's girl), Dian Belmont (Sandman's girl), Clarice Winston (The Spectre's love interest), and Inza Cramer (Doctor Fate's girlfriend). Needless to say, the feminine versions of some of the male super-doers' costumes—especially The Spectre's—are a hoot!

ALL STAR #16

This is the first of the propaganda issues, and also the first of the issues devoted to social concerns. The JSA fight against racial intolerance and enemy efforts to turn Americans of different ancestry against each other. Nicely done.

ALL STAR #17

Returning from the seeming dead (he took a nasty fall after the guys and gals ganged up on him in #15), Brain Wave shrinks the members down to eight inches in height. Wonder Woman misses the party by running an errand at a crucial moment. This time Brain Wave gets himself blown up along with his headquarters, but he still comes back.

ALL STAR #18

The King Bee, forerunner of The JLA's The Queen Bee, creates human criminals with the proportionate powers and abilities of various insects. Meanwhile, ***ALL-STAR***, having been promoted to a bi-monthly status with #6, becomes a quarterly again due to the wartime paper shortage. Not until #28 would it be bi-monthly again, that time to last until its cancellation.

ALL STAR #19

Hawkman mysteriously disappears, and to find him, the other members must solve crimes with a musical ***modus operandi***.

ALL STAR #20

A reduced page count leaves two members on the bench each issue if The JSA is to keep its heavy roster. This time Dr. Fate and Sandman sit around while the others investigate a menace called The Monster—a Jekyll/Hyde villain who is actually the man they have come to aid.

ALL STAR #21

It's Atom's and Spectre's turns to yawn and try to look busy while the other heroes are sent back in time (courtesy of the same device they used in #10) to alter a heroic man's tragic past life before he breathes his last. A touching tear-jerker.

ALL STAR #22

The extra member problem is solved as Sandman and Dr. Fate vanish from the roll call. No one has time to notice, however, in this, the second of what a later generation might call the "relevance" issues. Conscience the Good Fairy appears and sends the heroes into past ages to learn about bigotry. A classic treatment of an important issue.

ALL STAR #23

This is the first appearance of another arch-nemesis, the original Psycho-Pirate, who bases his crimes on emotions. He leads the members a merry chase before they uncover his true identity.

ALL STAR #24

The third "relevant" issue, the second appearance of Conscience, and a heaping helping of very controversial (then *and* now) propaganda. The JSA and Dick Amber, a young man who refuses to enlist, are sent into the past of Germany to explore its history as a warmongering and oppressor nation. This is a very frustrating issue in many ways: the information presented appears to be totally factual, yet one comes away with the uneasy feeling that little kids are being lied to here, as Germany comes off second only to Hades as a kingdom of the damned and perverted. When Amber is convinced of the error of his ways and joins up, I don't know whether to cheer or boo. As a pacifist, I had agreed with his refusal to enlist, but his reasons had not been mine, so when The JSA turns him around, I am unmoved. Ah, well. At least The JLA never did a similar number during the Viet Nam conflict. In the confusion this issue, The Spectre and Starman disappear, Wildcat and Mister Terrific do walk-ons, and Flash and Green Lantern come back to stay.

ALL STAR #25

Gardner Fox does Agatha Christie one better when an amnesiac turns up on The JSA's doorstep and sets them to reviving a 20-year-old murder investigation. The question is: Who is the nameless stranger? Is he the missing district attorney, the convicted culprit, one of the witnesses, or...someone else? And who's the masked man following the members around as they investigate? Great stuff for whodunit fans.

ALL STAR #26

The JSA faces its first space-born menace, metal men from Jupiter. (The JLA tackled aliens every other issue from their outset.)

ALL STAR #27

The fourth issue devoted to social justice. This one concerns the plight of the handicapped. A soldier who loses an arm in combat and his wheelchair-bound kid brother send The JSA to enlist the aid of other disabled youngsters in their battles. The JLA would undertake a parallel case in their 36th issue. Another classic in the series. Unnoticed in the general concern, Wildcat pinch-hits for The Atom.

ALL STAR #28

An ancient curse brings painting to life to wreak havoc. A chiller-diller.

ALL STAR #29

Landor is an ordinary guy in the 25th Century, but becomes a crime kingpin when he travels back the 20th with his future knowledge.

ALL STAR #30

Brain Wave shows up for the third time and subjects the members to a dream-machine which gives them living nightmares and succeeds in driving them all insane...except Johnny Thunder, who's ***already*** touched, so he becomes normal instead and snaps the others out of it. A very funny issue, but it does arouse disturbing thoughts that maybe Johnny Thunder was what we in these more enlightened times would call mentally-retarded, and more to be pitied than laughed at. Ah, the death of innocence.

ALL STAR #31

An intelligent energy-being from space takes over the mind of toymaker Willie Wonder, who begins to create super-weapons for criminals. Zor, the globe-being, reminded me of Aquarius, the villain of ***JLA #73-4.***

ALL STAR #32

The Psycho-Pirate comes back for a second try against a slightly different roster of heroes than opposed him the last time.

ALL STAR #33

Solomon Grundy, the monstrous nemesis of Green Lantern, returns (his third Golden Age appearance) to take on the whole Justice Society as he tracks GL across the country, intent on murder. Grundy is a fantastic villain, making this an epic issue. Doiby Dickles guest-stars, and in retrospect, Johnny Thunder's Thunderbolt makes its farewell appearance.

ALL STAR #34

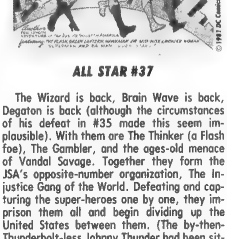
The Wizard (alias W.I. Zard) is inspired by his name and initials to study magic which he uses for crime. His master plan, however, is one of the most bizarre ever in comics. Since, as he sees it, nobody does anything for nothing or to benefit others, the seemingly simon-pure Justice Society ***must really be an organization of master criminals, pretending to be right guys until they can pull off the heist of the century!*** The Wizard, of course, wants in on it. It takes the super-heroes half-a-dozen chapters to convince the mad magician that they are what they appear to be. Priceless.

ALL STAR #35

Per Degaton, a scientist's assistant, uses a time machine to change history to benefit himself, bringing back The Dark Ages with himself as absolute ruler. Alerted to the danger, The JSA must capture him and put things to rights. A chilling moment occurs when Green Lantern finds himself ten years in the future in a world where Degaton won and the other six JSA members are bedraggled, hunted outlaws. (Little did he or the readers realize that ten years from then The JSA would not exist.)

ALL STAR #36

The Atom and Johnny Thunder turn up absent, so Superman and Batman volunteer to help solve the case of the five drowned men, victims of a mystic stream whose victims are reincarnated as manic evil-doers.



ALL STAR #37

The Wizard is back, Brain Wave is back, Degaton is back (although the circumstances of his defeat in #35 made this seem implausible). With them are The Thinker (a Flash foe), The Gambler, and the ages-old menace of Vandal Savage. Together they form the JSA's opposite-number organization, The Injustice Gang of the World. Defeating and capturing the super-heroes one by one, they imprison them all and begin dividing up the United States between them. (The by-then-Thunderbolt-less Johnny Thunder had been sitting on the shelf for several cases, thus solving the not-enough-pages problem again. This issue, though, he and Wonder Woman joined the others in the dungeon without so much as a panel devoted to their capture. To be fair, though, WW's bracelets are chained, robbing her strength.) Green Lantern even appears to have perished in the struggle, until the denouement. Oh, and the Junior Justice Society, the club for fans that all loyal ***ALL-STAR*** readers could then join, also put in a timely appearance in this issue.

ALL STAR #38

The greatest villains of history seemingly live again, and actually manage to ***kill*** the Justice Society members! Johnny Thunder uses his last breath to send Black Canary to Wonder Woman (thank goodness she stayed home ***that*** time!) for aid, and she revives the troupe with the Amazons' purple healing ray. Whew!

ALL STAR # 3 9

An innocent girl is suspected of being a witch when her every wish comes true with disastrous results (Johnny Thunder should have had some advice about ***that*** problem). To help her, The JSA enters a world in which magic works (parallelling the later case in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE #2***).

ALL STAR #40

The fifth, and alas, final "relevant" issue tackles the problem of kid gangs and juvenile delinquency. The closest that the Silver Age would come to this story would be an early Kid Flash short. Black Canary guest-stars, as she did in the previous issue, and Johnny Thunder disappears from the ranks. The Junior Justice Society also guests.

ALL STAR #41

The Wizard returns with an all-new Injustice Gang composed of The Fiddler (a Flash villain), Icicle (GL villain), Sportsmaster (also a GL foe), Huntress (surprisingly, a Wildcat villainess), and The Harlequin. Their plans to turn The JSA into mindless slaves and steal monuments to patriotism go awry thanks to Black Canary (who gets membership at last for her efforts) and The Harlequin, a traitor in the baddies' ranks who carried on a friendly rivalry with Green Lantern in his own strip.

ALL STAR #42

The Alchemist is a villain with powers like those of today's Doctor Alchemy, but he's actually a dead ringer for Professor Amos Fortune, The Justice League's perennial nemesis. The cover is the basis for that of JLA #6, Fortune's first appearance. The supposed Junior JSA members who appear are actually our heroes themselves, transformed temporarily into children!

ALL STAR #43

The JSA takes up extra-dimensional travel to stop the invading gold men who steal iron from our world into their own.

ALL STAR #44

Evil Star is a Hollywood rackets king and no relation to the modern-day Green Lantern's space-born foe. While in Hollywood to break up his schemes, The JSA "meet" assorted film stars of the day, albeit in cameo appearances.

ALL STAR #49

The heroes battle comet-being invaders from space, forewarned by a race of futuristic humans who lived on Earth in the distant past.

ALL STAR #50

Ten years before, a college classmate of Flash's predicted that he would become a master criminal in a decade...and now a new villain using the five sciences in which that student had been trained makes his appearance, and The JSA must capture him and learn his secret.

ALL STAR #51

First, gold men from another dimension...now The JSA faces diamond men from the center of the Earth.

ALL STAR #52

Incredibly, The JSA disappears from the Earth for a whole year, entranced victims of four diabolical kings, members of an ancient super-race. They awaken to find the four kings become world leaders, and the planet on the brink of World War III as a result!

ALL STAR #53

Another time-travel tale, as the JSA members pursue a missing murder weapon into the past to solve a whodunit.

ALL STAR #45

Ordinary objects filled with stellar energy gift a gang of bumbling crooks (their Earth-One doubles, almost, appear in a modern Flash story) with powers approximating those of The JSA members.

ALL STAR #46

A would-be detective with about as much on the ball as the departed J. Thunder involves The JSA in a comedy of errors when he not only mistakes the heroes for a gang they are out to stop, but supplies the real villains with robbery schemes worked out by The JSA.

ALL STAR #47

Billy the Kid, the notorious western outlaw, appears to step out of the history books to challenge the team.

ALL STAR #48

As they did in #21, The JSA visit turning points in another person's life as he lies dying. This time, however, the person in question is a young boy, and the heroes insert themselves into his future life to give him the will to live and defeat his illness.

ALL STAR #54

The Justice Society finds crime at the circus, where the Big Top performers are suspected of being a cover for a roving gang of looters.

ALL STAR #55

The JSA learns that all the planets of the solar system except Earth have been conquered by aliens from another galaxy, and fly to Jupiter to battle the invaders.

ALL STAR #56

The team travels in time once more—this time to the 31st century, which is menaced by the Chameleons, creatures who can impersonate any living being. Of course, since this is the universe of Earth-Two, that world would not be the world of The Legion of Super-Heroes, nor are the Chameleons related to the Legion's Durlan member, Chameleon Boy.

ALL STAR #57

When four famous detectives from different nations disappear, The JSA traces them around the world and battles The Key, yet another villain who will have a counterpart in The Justice League Rogues' Gallery. There is no inkling in this issue that this will be The Justice Society's final case...at least for the next twelve years. ●

NEXT ISSUE:

COMICS FEATURE interviews **STEVE GERBER,**

the man behind ***STEWART THE RAT, HOWARD THE DUCK,***

THUNDARR, and ***THE PHANTOM ZONE***

Peter Sanderson's *END NOTES* on Disney's ***FANTASIA***

Peter Gillis explains why it's so hard to write ***"Guilty Fantasies."***

MARGARET O'CONNELL begins her series on ***"Women and Power: The Super-Heroine as Power Fantasy"*** with The She-Hulk.

An interview with **Larry Gonick,** creator/writer/artist of **THE CARTOON HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE**

Murray Ward's ***"Super-Team Spirit"*** series moves into the 1960s, with ***THE FANTASTIC FOUR.***

The history of ***Captain Marvel*** at DC, by **Rich Morrissey**

Chuck Wooley examines Eastern Color Printing Co., in his newest ***"Lost Comics Companies."***

A fabulous cover by ***Steve Adams***

Plus: ***"Animated Chatter," "Evil-Doers Profiles," Letters, Listings, The Fandom Zone,*** and lots of surprises, information, and good reading. On sale the third week in May.

SUPERMAN-TIM PUBLICATIONS

by Chuck Wooley

Tim Publications, Inc., was a small publishing concern that issued a unique type of publication. During the 1940s they specialized in the production of small booklets which were printed in black with a one-color overlay, not four colors, and ranged in size from 5 3/8" x 8¼" to 6" x 9". These booklets were issued monthly, and were sold to major stores about the country.

These stores, meanwhile, had created "clubs" composed of local upper-class kids. The younger children, depending upon the year, became members of the Superman-Tim Club (from 1942-1950), the Gene Autry Tim Club (during part of 1950), or the Tim in Space Club (1950). The older children, at least from 1944-1949, could become members of the Archie club.

Club membership entitled one to the official monthly magazine, the right to enter the many contests sponsored by the magazines, and—for the Superman-Tim members—the right to own an official membership card. This card contained the non-alphabetical secret code and its translation, and enabled the member to pick up (in person only at the sponsoring store) the appropriate four-color stamp of Superman which was to be pasted into the official booklet each month.

Although the author did not have access to any of the ***GENE AUTRY TIM*** or ***TIM IN SPACE*** booklets while writing this article, it is likely that they were fashioned along the-lines of the ***SUPERMAN-TIM*** booklets. Created primarily for upper-class children, these booklets are remarkable records of what a child's life should have been during the 1940s.

The ***SUPERMAN-TIM*** booklets developed three distinct phases during their eight-year run. During their initial phase, it was clear the Tim Publishing was trying to expand the boundaries of the comic book reality. The first issue of ***SUPERMAN-TIM*** was issued about four years after the first copy of ***ACTION COMICS*** showcased Superman's debut, and it was very clear that the purpose of Superman-Tim was not to compete with the regular comic books, but rather to complement them.

Since the ***SUPERMAN-TIMs*** are so rare, many collectors are completely unfamiliar with them. For this reason, let us examine a randomly selected early issue (June, 1943):

The cover featured a monumental Superman who was grinning directly at the viewer while seven young boys and a dog, located at the bottom of the cover, made a romping dash in the direction of a large "VACATION" signpost. For many kids the prospect of Summer vacation is exhilarating, and this cover captured that romantic spirit admirably.

Page two, inside the front cover, featured Clark Kent reading a note from his friend, Tim, suggesting that the "gang" might enjoy a reminder about the upcoming Father's Day. The note also carried a P.S. which suggested that all the Tim members plan to make this a working vacation. What with the war and all, "grownups are plenty busy nowadays...." Further, "Only babies play all of the time, anyway!"

As this "positive propaganda" indicates, the ***SUPERMAN-TIM*** booklets were intended to be building blocks which would help to make better citizens. Although these moral admonitions may seem heavy-handed from our perspective, they fit the general tone of the publication well. Tim, Superman's close young friend, was striving to be a model citizen. Naturally, then, he couldn't help distributing a little well-intended advice to his friends.

Page three of this June issue was World War II-inspired, and is entitled "***Robots?***" It featured three panels of bizarrely-helmeted men who look much like technicians from the Empire of ***STAR WARS***. The text explains that the headgear had been developed for WWII, and the remainder of the page featured current improvements that had been made to armored cars and tanks. Tim, a brilliant inventor at a young age (much like Dickie Dean from ***SILVER STREAK COMICS***), was always stressing clear and creative thinking, and during our time of War he did not hesitate to think of better ways to kill the enemy!

Page four featured a cut-out of Chief Moose-face, his canoe, and his three little Indians. The page was complete with detailed instructions regarding the proper cutting and pasting of this toy that was "built" right into the magazine! The Tim booklets were intended to immerse the reader in worthwhile learning experiences, and features like this one managed to do just that.

Page five featured a full-page illo of Superman, who was promoting one of the enless contests that Tim sponsored. The subject that month was airplanes, and since Tim knew that people have varied aptitudes, three different types of admissions were being accepted for the contest. One could "draw an airplane picture, write an airplane poem, *or* a letter about your favorite aviator." 100 lucky Tim Club members would receive a magnificent prize if they won the contest: a real cardboard "Pre-Flight Trainer!" It was a heavy-duty reproduction of "a real airplane cockpit, with instrument panel, wheel and rudder pedals... all movable. There will also be a special game attachment, with gun sight and enemy planes." Plus "a 24-page booklet with lessons in 'How to Fly'... authentic pre-flight training!".

Page six of this typical early ***SUPERMAN-TIM*** featured several dynamic illos of Superman, with villain and Tim, along with a secret story in code. Page seven featured an article on raising rabbits, an easy (albeit somewhat gruesome) way for Tim members to earn money and help the domestic meat shortage. Page eight featured the Superman-Tim text story for that issue (Superman and Tim were often adventuring together), the "***Brown Scorpion Mystery***." The page features nice illos of Superman, Tim, and the villain (a craft-looking Mandarin type). Of course, to solve the mystery of the issue, one needed to read the solution which was printed in secret code on the back of that month's (that's June of 1943) Superman-Tim stamp!

The centerfold was a six page foldout which featured Superman promoting official Superman-Tim store clothes of various types. (Ol' "Supes" was more concerned about proper dress than most of his fans may think!)

Page nine was a feature on "***How I'd Like to be a SUPER-DUPER DIVER!***," which included instructions on diving, along with a picture word game. Page ten displayed three inventions created by club members (including a "Porcupine Coat for boys who are always being pushed around."), plus an appeal for readers to send in inventions of their own (and **win** $1.00 by so doing).

Page eleven was a variety page which advocated making birdfeeders, planting Victory Gardens, and caring for one's shoes "now that we can only buy a few pairs of shoes each year." (It's enough to make one wonder how many pairs of shoes these Superman-Tim members received each year before the war—but, then, this **was** an upper-class club.)

Pages twelve and thirteen were a real treat, as they reprinted (in black and white probably from the original silver proofs) pages one and two from the "***Superman***" story in the August 1943 issue of ***ACTION COMICS***.

Page 14 stressed the importance of a good education, and featured a complex diagram discussing the regimen of an airplane pilot school.

Page 15 was a catch-all page, featuring that month's installment about Pets, a continuation of the canoe-building instructions from page four, a Superman illo with the answer to the several puzzles in the issue, and the regular monthly admonition "DON'T BE A '***WHOO SHOO***.'"

A "***WHOO SHOO***," for those unfamiliar with the term, is "a boy who gets this magazine, but doesn't buy ***any*** of his clothes at the Superman-Tim Store. Gee Whiz, who would want to be like that?" Clearly being a "***WHOO SHOO***" was much worse than having cooties!

As our sample issue indicates, Superman-Tim publications had a very clear threefold purpose. The first was to sell official Superman-Tim clothes; the second was to build moral character and social responsibility; and the third was to create hours of fun for grade school boys (it is clear that this was not a publication for girls) who grew up before television.

The ***SUPERMAN-TIM***s came out for almost five years before entering their second stage, which is clearly the most desirable one from the comics collector's point of view. This second stage began somewhere between September and November, 1946, and lasted until December of 1947. The ***TIM***s issued during this time are particularly desirable because they featured actual comic strip stories of Superman and Tim together. Originally 16 pages each (the last few were only 8-pagers), the stories are clearly from the Siegel & Shuster studios, as are all of the illustrations from all of the ***SUPERMAN-TIM***s which the author has seen. In fact, it is the exceptional quality that the art possesses which makes the entire "***Tim***" series so desirable. Oftentimes (a visit to any toy store will confirm this) licensed characters such as super-heroes are drawn on their licensed goods by in-house toy company artists, and they simply do not appear to be correctly drawn. The earlier illustrations from the ***SUPERMAN-TIM***s, however, must be from the Siegel & Shuster studios, and even the later issues appear to have some S&S shop artwork.

The actual comic-strip adventures of Tim and Superman are of two types. The first, which lasted from 1946 until August of 1947, follow the adventures of Tim as he uses the "Whirlaway Watch" that he and Superman invented to travel to exciting lands in the past. This series of adventures, each of which are 16 pages in length, take Tim to such exotic locales as Ancient Rome and Egypt, Bagdad of the Arabian Nights, Peru in 1492, Arizona in 1447, and the Barbary Coast in 1650. Although the stories focused on Tim, Superman was a necessary plot element. These stories are historical and fanciful, and made good reading for kids in 1946 and 1947. They still make good reading for adults in 1981!

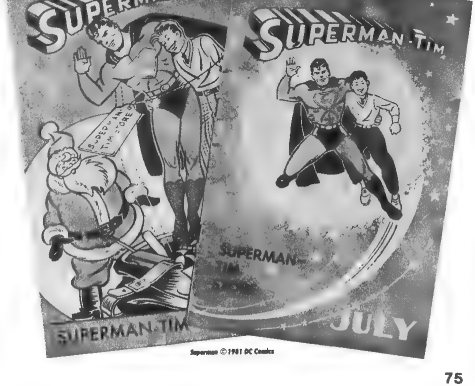
The second type of comic-strip story that appeared in ***SUPERMAN-TIM*** took place in 1947, and featured Tim's attempted rescue of an American pilot trapped on "***The Floating Island.***" Tim sets off to rescue to trapped pilot in the September 1947 issue, and he remained on the floating fantasy island until the ***SUPERMAN-TIM*** comic strip's demise, which occurred in December of 1947. Readers were advised to be watchful for the next installment of the story which was to be printed in the January 1948 issue, but it did not appear.

SUPERMAN-TIM entered its final phase in January of 1948. Although these ***5***-Ts were much like the others, times were changing, and the unadulterated idealism that typified America during WW II was beginning to erode. ***Film Noir*** was making its mark in Hollywood and in much of the country. Fred Wertham was stepping up his anti-comics crusade.

Nonetheless, ***SUPERMAN-TIM*** continued for about two more years, and the later issues, like the earlier ones, are glorious examples of the joy that one's youth may have.

Our story is not yet concluded, however, for, like many golden age comics publishers, Tim Publications, Inc. actually disguised periodicals under more than one name. While it is true that the ***SUPERMAN-TIM***s are extraordinarily rare, it seems that the publications from Tim's other imprint, Diamond Sales Corporation, are actually even rarer.

ARCHIE Your Official Store Club Magazine was aimed at comics readers of a high school age, and, although structurally similar to ***SUPERMAN-TIM***, it was outwardly fairly different. Its size was about 3/4" larger all around, and although it still printed only one extra color (besides black) it made use of top-quality photographs. The April 1949 issue featured Archie and Gloria De Haven holding Easter rabbits, while the inside front cover featured a "What Do You Know?" quiz. Page three featured an illustration of Archie and Foodini, along with a text piece on Archie's visit to the CBS Television Studios to watch a filmin of ***THE LUCKY PUP*** show (later known as ***PINHEAD AND FOODINI***!). There were fewer than a million TV sets in the U.S. when this magazine was issued, and the fact that this ***Archie*** "publication" featured such a story says much about the magazine. This publication, like ***TIM***, was aimed at affluent kids who were practicing to be model citizens.



Superman © 1981 DC Comics

Page four featured a "***Write the Caption***" gag cartoon drawn by the prolific golden age cartoonist Gill Fox, who is mentioned in an inset and depicted in a photo. Page five had five gags written by Archie readers (who received $1.00 each), along with an NBC publicity photo of Jerry Lewis. Page six had a great caricature of Benny Goodman, plus a text feature concerning his new "Bop" band (Swing was out by 1949). Page seven featured Archie's record reviews, plus a contest announcement. Page eight was entitled a "***Special Announcement to our Readers***" and offered a one-year college scholarship to a student who could win a contest by writing an essay under the general title of "***College and Careers.***" Page nine included a list of topics and other general contest information.

Pages ten and eleven featured a humorous Archie text story with a large one-color illo depicting Archie, Jughead, Betty, and Veronica. Page twelve was a one-page comic strip (done by executive editor Leon Jason) about a US President. Page thirteen had illos of Archie and Veronica, as well as a still from the 20th Century Film ***MOTHER IS A FRESHMAN***, starring Loretta Young and Van Johnson. Further, there are reviews of that movie and the ***BARKLEYS OF BROADWAY***. Page fourteen was an essay entitled "***Thinking of College***" which was written by "an old Archie fan" who was currently a student at Goddard College in Plainfield, Vermont. Illos of Archie rounded out the page. Page fifteen featured quiz answers and a list of contest winners, as well as an exhortation to send letters to the editor (via "YOUR OFFICIAL ARCHIE STORE"). The back cover (page 16) featured the mailing information and a half-page clothing advertisement.

As the features in the ***ARCHIE*** magazine illustrate, Tim Publications, Inc. was not, unfortunately, for every child. It was, rather, designed for upper-class children who lived in an idealized environment. If Brooklyn (of the Boy Commandos) ever saw a fellow child dressed like the children in the Tim Publications clothing advertisements, he would probably let had let loose with a Bronx cheer. And yet, what a wonderful childhood environment the Tim Publications represented! Life was a never-ending series of challanges just waiting to be overcome, filled with enticing rewards for those who could dress properly. In fact, the greatest danger that one of Tim's readers normally faced was being labelled a "***WHOO SHOO***." Don't let that happen to you!

Superman comic strips from the 1940s are currently extremely difficult to find on the collector's market, and they command ever-escalating prices. This situation is, naturally enough, the result of a variety of market factors. The most important single factor, however, is the quality of the product. Superman stories from the 1940s—and particularly those from the studio of Superman's creators, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster—are of absolute top quality. All things considered, they have never been surpassed.

Most collectors, though, are still uninformed when it comes to the ***SUPERMAN-TIM*** comic strips. This is largely because so little is known about them by **anyone**. For example, no one seems to know when the first ***SUPERMAN-TIM*** appeared—or even when the last one appeared. Even the ***OVERSTREET'S PRICE GUIDE***, that bastion of comic facts, fails to list the issues of ***SUPERMAN-TIM*** that feature Superman comic strips! Further, Overstreet lists some ***SUPERMAN-TIM***s as existing without Superman illos inside on the text pages. This seems hard to believe given the almost ostentatious display of Superman images in all the ***SUPERMAN-TIM***s the author has been so fortunate enough to examine.

Why are the ***SUPERMAN-TIM***s so rare? Why is so little known about them, even about the ones that feature sixteen-page "***Superman***" stories? The answer, it seems, lies in their original distribution (being marketed only to upper-class children, and then only as free promotional material), their intrinsic characteristics (boys were supposed to cut many of the pages apart), and their innate desirability. To those who have grown up with Superman, and who feel that they know most of what there is to know about the Kryptonian, these booklets are truly shocking. Who is this kid Tim, that Superman likes so much? Does Jimmy Olsen know about him? How did Superman manage to have all of the adventures he recounts having experienced with Tim, without letting his many loyal comic readers in on the fun? And the artwork! Truly, the artwork in the Tims is most refreshing. Superman is portrayed in the ***SUPERMAN-TIM***s in classic Siegel and Shuster style, and no one is about to find it Boring. It's exhilarating!

The ***TIM***s, then, are so rare and so little-known because, first, very few exist, but second, and perhaps even more importantly, because they are so exciting. ***SUPERMAN-TIM***s introduce the collector who finds one for the first time to a world of Superman that they never knew existed—a "T" world, so to speak. And once the initial exhilaration of finding this new reality passes, there is always the attraction of returning to an idealized childhood... of either the world in which one grew up, or the world in which one wanted to mature. If a ***SUPERMAN-TIM*** finds its way to the collector's market, it is usually purchased almost immediately and then lovingly housed in a permanent collection, unlikely to reappear upon the market for many years. ●

GUILTY FANTASIES

a column by PETER B. GILLIS

My dearest Mina:

Even now, as I sit here, writing you this letter, dearest Mina, a dreadful sense of horror competes to fill my senses. No Western man, perhaps no human since the dawn of time, has been gripped with the terror that the experiences of the past evening have instilled in my breast. The words you read here may cause you to doubt my sanity (nor can I blame you) but it is all the veriest truth.

As you by now know, dearest Mina, in my comic book vaults I have a pile of what are called "fanzines," many of which (propriety forbids me to mention names) attempt to criticize the other comics in a literary or artistic manner. They are fairly harmless, and even in that mysterious midnight hour when my books come to life, they sit quietly. But on the night of the 12th last, I, weary with my endeavors, absent-mindedly threw into their pile copies of ***COMMENTARY*** and ***THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS*** and let them lie. When I resumed my esoteric and occult studies, I thought no more about it.

The dreadful, the incredible thing that happened, I surmise in retrospect, is that some sort of hideous spontaneous generation must have taken effect, for when next I entered the vaults, I was confronted with a shambling, grotesque, shapeless mass of pulp and pretension called—CRITICISM-THING!

"All right, Gillis," it burbled in a voice reminiscent of Malcolm Muggeridge, though infinitely worse, "I've had it up to here with you exposing your neuroses in print! This self-indulgent stuff has got to go!"

"W-what do you mean?"

"I mean," it licked its lips, what they were of them (I later found out that talking about meaning only strengthened its unholy life), "that this personal stuff isn't criticism at all! It's just meandering, impressionistic twaddle!

And I ***think***," it made a mockery of a wink, "that it's the only way you can justify liking the comics you like. It's the same self-indulgent stuff as your column!"

Disconcerted, I resorted to my first, and tawdriest, line of defense. "I'm a professional writer: how dare you, ***fan***, to question my opinions!"

It did not even pause, Mina! "It'll do you no good, armed with the very sparks you yourself added to me, I can presume anything! Why, writers seldom know the sub-text of their work—and most definitely are not aware of most of the flaws!"

I stalled for time. "This so-called 'self-indulgence': define your terms, if your please."

"Why, that's easy. When an artist throws aside the classic values of good storytelling and proper visuality, and goes in for over-writing, personal head-trips, and obsessions with thematic considerations which are usually sexist anyway, that's when you've got self-indulgence instead of good, solid comics."

"Aha, you're talking about commerciality again."

It reeled. "No! Of course, commerciality is a strong force in the industry, but an artist has got to communicate with his audience!"

"But won't self-indulgence, as long as it's intelligible in some way, communicate

character © 1981 Marvel Comics Group

something to the audience?"

"You—you—" it hissed. "What is needed is good, solid, underplayed stories, not all this ***flash***!" With that word, it seemed to gain mass and advanced.

But by now, I felt I could defend myself. "Flash, as I take you define it, is the sort of frippery, little bits of business, verbal or graphic decoration that is not essential to the straightforward flow of the plot."

"Exactly," it gloated.

"But then, might it not occur to you that there is nothing sacred about the plot. ***Especially*** if the storyline leans toward the formulaic."

"Negatively-loaded word! Negatively-loaded word!"

"All right, traditional if you will. But might it not be that the pleasurable matter might be located in the decoration rather than the plot? In the scientific or legendary underpinnings, or the sprightly dialogue?"

"It's disregarding the basics of good narrative—"

"What's so good about narrative? All right, it carries you along, but where does it take you? If there are not pleasurable sights to see along the way, who would bother to go?"

"We don't want to see someone pouring his guts out about his own hangups! No more stories about some writer's divorce!"

It started to shake at that point. That was when I knew I had wounded it. Some sixth sense told me that in its present form, it was incapable of naming names or making personal accusations. (All the better for me: who wants a lawsuit?) Now I pressed my attack.

"If the artist was the **only** one who ever suffered a divorce, and the details were always ***exactly*** the same, then you might have a point. But if you deny the exposure of self, and insist on adherence to ***formula***" (this time my word went unchallenged, but I annexed it anyway), "traditional, defined-by-the-commonplace story parameters, you deny by implication that a person's individual experience has any relevance to the world at large, that only abstract categories have relevance!"

"We don't wants to hear no whinings from the writerses. We wants entertainment."

"What's so entertaining about a story which treads on the same ground as all the others, with only trivial variations?"

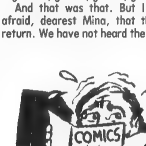
"They are nice, my preciouss. Aren't they? Nice to ***read***."

"But a) if you like the familiarity, why not read the same story again, and b) if it's the little variations you like, why not ask for more ***flesh*** in your stories, because that's all it is? The irrelevant stuff? I posit a) that you tend to like the 'solid story-telling' because unfamiliarity, strangeness, and even, yes, perhaps ***other people*** and their experiences scare you! You don't want to get involved in experience with any variety to it. Especially if it's not challenging! Crawling into your own womb! You call it escapism, but you don't escape when you crawl into a womb! You trap yourself!"

"And furthermore," I continued, "You talk about 'story-telling' in comics as if it's some mystical thing. You've heard 'pros' use it to praise artists like Herb Trimpe and Frank Robbins, very often artists whom you didn't like when you were younger. So when you grew up and sought to lay childish things aside, you pick up on these strange qualities talked about by 'pros' and cling to them. Well, let me tell you something: very often, a writer will refer to an artist's 'story-telling' capabilities by meaning that the artist draws what the writer wants him to draw. And clearly. But that is not a virtue that surpasseth all else! And very often someone, even another writer, can't ascertain an artist's faithfulness! You have to include beauty (remember beauty? Isn't that important to you guys?), power, and all the stuff that made comics exciting ***and expanding***? Remember how much fun it is to break the rules every once in a while? AREN'T THERE DIFFERENT WAYS TO DO A COMIC BOOK, AND MANY DIFFERENT PLEASURES TO BE HAD?"

And Criticism-Thing slunk back into a corner, murmuring, "Nice master. Nice master, my preciousss. Nassty writer burns us and kicks us, and leaves us without telling argument, gollum, gollum, gollum—"

And that was that. But I am very much afraid, dearest Mina, that the monster will return. We have not heard the end of him. ●



End NOTES

©1981 Peter Sanderson

Those of us who look forward to reading new installments of Leonard Starr's admirable ***ANNIE*** strip, which I discussed in the ***"Year in Review"*** section two issues ago, should not forget about its truly great predecessor, the late Harold Gray's ***LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE***. At the time I write this, the Museum of Cartoon Art in Port Chester, New York, is holding an exhibition of original artwork from over the ***ANNIE*** series' nearly sixty-year history. The number of originals on display is quite small, fillings only the walls of one room, but they have obviously been chosen with great care, and provide important insights into the strip.

Take, for example, the fairy-tale basis of the strip in its initial years. The Sunday page for December 21, 1924, on display opens with a panel showing Santa Claus driving a rocket ship of toys. The story proper opens with Annie's mean-spirited employer ordering her to stay in the store over Christmas. Annie breaks into tears, and decides that there is "no Santa Claus for orphans." A wealthy man who, except for his beard, looks and dresses much like her adoptive father, Oliver "Daddy" Warbucks, disagrees: "There's a Santa Claus for everybody." He gives her new clothes and makes her his guest for Christmas. Seeing his mansion Annie marvels, "This must be one of those castles they tell about." Gray must have chosen those words carefully, for he also has Annie say, "Gee whiskers—I feel like Cinderella—are you a fairy prince?" Her mysterious benefactor replies, "No, but I'd like to be." Annie is indeed like Cinderella here: a poor unloved girl who is suddenly transported into a world of wish-fulfillment, as if by magic.

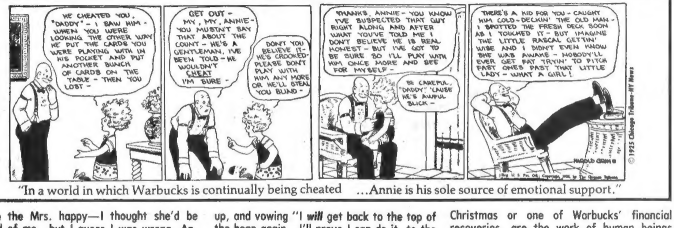
The mysterious benefactor leaves briefly only to return dressed as Santa Claus; the more naive Annie of the strip's first year does not see through the disguise and believes she is meeting the real Santa. He presents her with a Christmas tree and many gifts and then departs to return as himself. "Was anyone here while I was out?" he inquires. Annie, looking as if she had just witnessed a miracle she had long and desperately sought, holds up her new doll and says, "Yes, look! There *is* a Santa Claus."

Meanwhile, in the dailies for late 1924, the same themes run through a similar, but less happy, story-line. In the earliest original of the strip known to exist, that of August 30, 1924, Annie is adopted by the first Mrs. Warbucks, who takes her to an enormous mansion in a limousine with a dollar sign engraved on its door. How enormous is this mansion, you ask? It turns out to be so big that the car drives right into it through the front door! Again, as in that Sunday Christmas sequence, Annie is suddenly rescued from a life of misery and deprivation and brought into what must seem to her to be a story-book paradise. Once again, there is a loving father figure who presides over this new world. Annie's journey from a world of fear to one of love is summed up in her first encounter with Oliver Warbucks, in the September 27, 1924, strip. Apparently enraged, Warbucks, towering over his new ward, commands her, "Listen here, don't you ever ***dare*** to call me ***Mr. Warbucks*** again—" "Yes, sir!" Annie replies, the waviness of the lettering testifying to the terror she feels. Then, abruptly, with a great smile, Warbucks picks her up and lifts her into the air: "You call me ***Daddy***—see?"

But, also like Cinderella, Annie has an evil stepmother, and this one is more successful at ruining the heroine's happiness. While Warbucks, in these first strips, seems wholly unchanged by his great wealth, walking about in undershirt and trousers with suspenders, his wife obviously revels in her riches and pretensions, apparently at the price of her humanity. She shows up at the orphanage to adopt Annie complete with a snobbish expression, a lorgnette, and a mean-looking Pekinese. "Of course it must only be an trial," Mrs. Warbucks declares, to which the orphanage head, named Mrs. Asthma (not Miss Hannigan, as in the musical), agrees, "'Naturally, Mrs. Warbucks—knowing orphans as I do, I heartily agree with you." Obviously, Annie is not to find sympathy from either woman, and as soon as "Daddy" leaves town, Mrs. Warbucks sends her right back to the orphanage, without even allowing her to take—or wear—on the way back any of the clothes the Warbucks had given her. "I kept her over two months—" Mrs. Warbucks declares, "I always like to be more than fair—but charitable as I am, I must say Annie is impossible!" Mrs. Asthma's needle is still stuck in the same groove: "Knowing Annie as I do, I can quite appreciate your attitude, Mrs. Warbucks." (10/30/28) The ball has ended and Cinderella is again confined to servitude until her prince returns for her.

The first Mrs. Warbucks eventually leaves her husband, but the second proves to be yet another "evil stepmother." She is a former showgirl named, of course, Trixie, who feigns affection for Annie in order to maneuver Warbucks into marrying her. Annie wants them to marry for "Daddy's" sake, and "Daddy" decides to marry Trixie for Annie's. In both marriages the bond between surrogate father and surrogate daughter proves stronger by far than that between husband and wife. Both wives are really outsiders, incapable of love. Once married, Trixie refers to Annie and her dog Sandy as "that impudent little guttersnipe and her mongrel," and ends up trying to milk Warbucks for huge alimony payments with the help of a lawyer named (wait for it) Tim Jackal. Eventually the second Mrs. Warbucks vanishes from the strip (this story-line all takes place in 1932) and there is never another. Oliver Warbucks does not seem to need a wife thereafter, nor Annie a mother. They instead find complete emotional fulfillment in each other. Freudians take note.

Just as Annie finds her escape from loneliness and unhappiness in Warbucks, he finds the same escape through her. In the October 3, 1924, strip, Warbucks recounts the story of his life with some pride but mostly melancholy. "Ever since I can remember, Annie, I've been alone same as you—nobody ever helped me—I had to help myself, see? The wife and I had pretty rough going—I had a little machine shop—Then the war came along—I was too old to fight but I wanted to do my bit so I made munitions—Well, I made a fortune too, and everybody hates me for it—" The autobiography becomes a confession. "Maybe I did wrong, Annie, but I did the best I knew... I thought money would


WE CREATED YOU, "DADDY" — I SAW HIM — WHEN YOU WERE SHOWING THE OTHER WAY ME PUT THE CARDS YOU WERE PLAYING WITH IN HIS POCKET AND PUT ANOTHER THING OF CARDS ON THE TABLE — THEN YOU LOST —
GET OUT — MY, MY, ANNIE — YOU MUSTN'T SAY THAT ABOUT THE COUNT — HE'S A GENTLEMAN, I'VE BEEN TOLD — HE WOULDN'T CHEAT
DON'T YOU BELIEVE IT — HE'S CROOKED — PLEASE DON'T PLAY WITH HIM ANY MORE OR HE'LL STEAL YOU BLIND —
THANKS, ANNIE — YOU KNOW I'VE SUSPECTED THAT CUFF RIGHT ALONG, AND AFTER WHAT YOU'VE TOLD ME I DON'T BELIEVE HE IS REAL HONEST — BUT I'VE GOT TO BE SURE SO I'LL PLAY WITH HIM ONCE MORE AND SEE FOR MYSELF —
IN CAMELOT, DADDY 'CAUSE HE'S AWFUL RICH —
THERE'S A KID FOR YOU — CAUGHT HIM COLD — BECAUSE THE OLD MAN I SPOTTED THE FRESH DECK SOON AS I TOOKAHIM — SINCE THE LITTLE RASCAL GETTIN' WISE AND I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW HE WAS AWAKE — NOBODY'LL EVER GET PAT TRYIN' TO PULL PARTY OVER'S PAST THAT LITTLE LADY — WANT A CIGAR?
HAROLD GRAY
© 1933 Chicago Tribune-NY News Syndicate, Inc.

"In a world in which Warbucks is continually being cheated ...Annie is his sole source of emotional support."

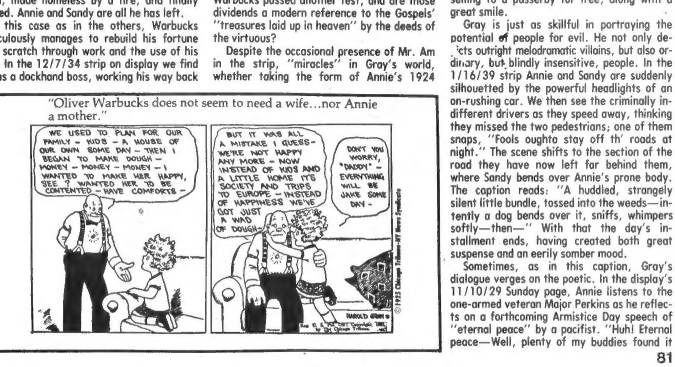
make the Mrs. happy—I thought she'd be proud of me—but I guess I was wrong, Annie—I've made nothing but mistakes all my life." Annie replies, "Don't you worry—I love you, 'Daddy.'" Similarly, later two imposters show up claiming to be Annie's real parents and charging that Warbuck's recurring absences have been bad for her. Warbucks again confesses to his ward: "They were right—I have failed you, time and time again—I never meant to, but that's no excuse." Again Annie offers absolution and affection in response: "Shucks, forget it—I love you, 'Daddy,' and always will—" (2/4/34) In the strip's first years, then, Annie provides Warbucks with reassurance that his life and achievements have meaning, that his real or imagined faults do not matter ultimately, and that he is worthy of love. In a world in which Warbucks is continually being cheated out of his fortune by his enemies, Annie is the source of emotional support. Perhaps the most startling example can be found in Dover Books' ***LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE IN THE GREAT DEPRESSION***, containing strips from 1930, in which Warbucks is impoverished by a stock market crash, made homeless by a fire, and finally blinded. Annie and Sandy are all he has left.

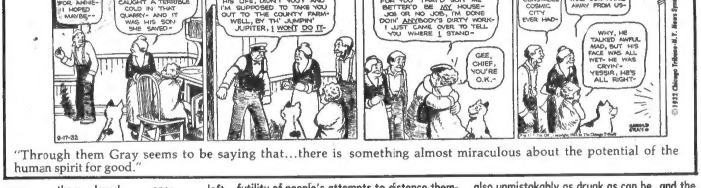
In this case as in the others, Warbucks miraculously manages to rebuild his fortune from scratch through work and the use of his wits. In the 12/7/34 strip on display we find him as a dockhand boss, working his way back up, and vowing "I *will* get back to the top of the heap again—I'll prove I can do it, to the world—and to myself." Gray appears to conceive this as a test imposed on Warbucks to determine the extent of his spiritual strength, and perhaps even as a test with divine origins. In the 2/16/41 Sunday, Warbucks is soliloquizing in his office about how he is building munitions to "preserve the freedom we all cherish" from the danger posed by the unnamed Axis powers. Abruptly and inexplicably, Mr. Am, a tall, bearded man who in a previous story-line claimed to have witnessed the age of dinosaurs and who proved to possess mysterious powers, appears behind Warbucks. Mr. Am has heard what Warbucks just said and inquires, "Have you counted the cost to you?" Warbucks replies that he has, "and if it takes my entire fortune—billions—it will be money well spent—this is one enterprise for which I want no profit." "Hmm," Mr. Am comments, "and for that very reason it may return the greatest dividends," and then, after wishing Warbucks "good luck" (a blessing?), the God-like being arrives as suddenly as he came. Has Warbucks passed another test, and are those dividends a modern reference to the Gospels' "treasures laid up in heaven" by the deeds of the virtuous?

Despite the occasional presence of Mr. Am in the strip, "miracles" in Gray's world, whether taking the form of Annie's 1924 Christmas or one of Warbucks' financial recoveries, are the work of human beings themselves. Although the bond between them remains just as strong, both Annie and Warbucks become increasingly self-reliant over the years, and virtually invulnerable to guilt, loneliness or, usually, even pessimism. Through them Gray seems to be saying that anything is possible once one puts his mind to it, and that there is something almost miraculous about the potential of the human spirit for good. In the exhibition's Sunday strip for December 26, 1936, Annie reflects that "We don't stop to figger much about **why** we have Christmas—I don't s'pose lots o' people **ever** think o' th' three Wise Men or th' little child born in a stable, or any o' that—And folks in dif'rent lands have dif'rent stories—no, it's nothin' you can put your finger on—it's just sort o' a fever or somethin' that seems to hit ever'body, everywhere, this time o' year—" In short, it is basic to the human spirit to "want to give—to help—to want to be kind" at Christmas, and Annie caps her lesson for the reader by giving one of the flowers she is selling to a passerby for free, along with a great smile.

Gray is just as skillful in portraying the potential of people for evil. He not only de-picts outright melodramatic villains, but also ordinary, kind, blindly insensitive people. In the 1/16/39 strip Annie and Sandy are suddenly silhouetted by the powerful headlights of an on-rushing car. We then see the criminally indifferent drivers as they speed away, thinking they missed the two pedestrians; one of them snaps, "Fools oughta stay off th' roads at night." The scene shifts to the section of the road they have now left far behind them, where Sandy bends over Annie's prone body. The caption reads: "A huddled, strangely silent little bundle, tossed into the weeds—intently a dog bends over it, sniffs, whimpers softly—then—" With that the day's installment ends, having created both great suspense and an eerily somber mood.

Sometimes, as in this caption, Gray's dialogue verges on the poetic. In the display's 11/10/29 Sunday page, Annie listens to the one-armed veteran Major Perkins as he reflects on a forthcoming Armistice Day speech of "eternal peace" by a pacifist. "Huh! Eternal peace—Well, plenty of my buddies found it


"Oliver Warbucks does not seem to need a wife...nor Annie a mother."
WE USED TO PLAN FOR OUR FAMILY — KIDS — A HOUSE OF OUR OWN SOME DAY — THEN I BEGAN TO MAKE DOUGH — MONEY — MONEY — MONEY — I WANTED TO MAKE HER HAPPY, SEE ? WANTED HER TO BE CONTENTED — HAVE COMFORTS —
BUT IT WAS ALL A MISTAKE I GUESS — WE'RE NOT HAPPY ANY MORE — NOW INSTEAD OF KIDS AND A LITTLE HOME IT'S SOCIETY AND TRIPS TO EUROPE — INSTEAD OF HAPPINESS WE'VE GOT JUST A KIND OF DOWAGER —
DON'T YOU WORRY, "DADDY" — EVERYTHING WILL BE JAKE SOME DAY —
HAROLD GRAY
© 1933 Chicago Tribune-NY News Syndicate, Inc.


WHERE COMES THE TOWNSFOLK FOR ANNIE— (I HOPED MAYBE)—
OH, HE CAN'T TAKE HER TO THE COUNTY FARM TODAY— SHE CAUGHT A TERRIBLE COLD IN THAT QUARRY— AND IT WAS HIS SON THAT SAVED HER!
WELL, YOUNG LADY— YOU PULLED MY AUGUSTUS OUT OF THE QUARRY AND SAVED HIS LIFE, DIDN'T YOU? AND I'M SUPPOSED TO TAKE YOU OUT TO THE COUNTY FARM— WELL, BY TH' JUMPIN' JUPITER, I WON'T DO IT—
I'VE TORE UP THAT BLASTED ORDER— YOU CAN STAY HERE FOREVER, ANNIE— ONLY PLACE FOR YOU THAT'D SUIT ME BETTER'D BE AN HOUSE-JOB OR NO JOB, I'M DONE— DONE ANYBODY'S DIRTY WORK— I JUST CAME OVER TO TELL YOU WHERE I STAND—
GEE, CHIEF— YOU'RE O.K.—
PETE PINCHER'S TH' BEST CONSTABLE COSMIC CITY EVER HAD—
OH, I DUNNO— I COULD TAKE OUR ANNIE AWAY FROM HIM—
WHY, HE TALKED AWFUL MAD, BUT HIS FACE WAS ALL WET— HE WAS CRYIN'— CRYIN', HE'S ALL RIGHT!
8-17-33.
© 1933 Chicago Tribune-N.Y. News Syndicate
HARRY HERSHFIELD

"Through them Gray seems to be saying that...there is something almost miraculous about the potential of the human spirit for good."

over there—loved ones left behind—rain—mud—shells—shells—shells FEAR—madness—filth—barbed wire—a bayonet in the dark—a wooden cross—the glory of war—" Perkins observes that a generation that has experienced war wants no more of it, but in another evocative montage of imagery, he shows how the next generation in his opinion will inevitably succumb to war's allure: "They hear the drums—The pacifist's voice is drowned by the beat of marching feet—Excitement, training camps, uniforms—tears, heartaches, waiting at home, gold stars and empty chairs—" As she and Sandy leave, Annie ends the day's installment on an ominously ironic note: "Most kids I know think war is grand—when they're grown up, Major Perkins an' th' rest who know what war is will be old an' old folks' advice never means much to young folks—War won't seem bad to them—I noticed th' kids playin' soldier down th' street this mornin'—"

The poetry, of course, is also very much present in Gray's artwork. Take the December 10,1925, daily in which Warbucks has learned that his wife has deserted him. First he strides through the rain in silhouette, looking determined, but then he raises his arms upward, palms out as if in supplication, and finally he trudges into the background, his stopped shoulders conveying utter defeat. Or look at the daily for December 22, 1951, in which Annie and a companion, their faces obscured by hoods, lie exhausted among snowdrifts against a black sky, looking more like inanimate lumps than people; the scene becomes a disturbing evocation of death.

Besides the strips already mentioned, there was a good deal more of interest in the exhibition, including a glipse of Sandy as a puppy (circa January 1925) and the strip in which Annie's trademark red dress is made (in November 1927). A few beautiful examples of Starr's *ANNIE* were also on display. The show may have been small, but it was full of gems.

Both before and, for a while, concurrently with the run of the *ANNIE* exhibit, the Museum of Cartoon Art was also holding a show of original art by the late Peter Arno, who did both covers and one-panel cartoons for *THE NEW YORKER* from the 1920s until his death in 1968. His favorite strategy in the cartoons on display is to demonstrate the absurdity and futility of people's attempts to distance themselves from the ordinary, the unpleasant, the undignified and the ludicrous aspects of life.

An unpublished cover in the exhibit makes the point simply: it shows a number of expensively-dressed men and women with blank expressions on their faces watching not a limousine pulling up but a cat and her kittens walking manchalantly by. Arno's 6/19/56 *NEW YORKER* cover provides a slight variation: it depicts cows gazing through a window at a society party. The people in both cartoons are trying to transcend the ordinary world through their wealth, attitudes and life-styles; by juxtaposing them with simple, unpretentious animals, Arno points out not only that the ordinary will always be part of life but that attempts to ignore it have something ludicrously pretentious about them. The 5/1/54 cover extends the idea. Here we see a group of showgirls, all wearing large, glittering tiaras, necklaces, earrings and bracelets. But rather than admiring their own jewelry, the showgirls' eyes are all drawn to the comparitively tiny, less than showy engagement ring that one of their number is wearing. All the rest of the jewelry is no more than empty glamour; the ring, on the other hand, carries true emotional meaning. It is reality while the rest is artifice.

Arno's funnier characters in the exhibit are often those who steadfastly, even passionately attempt to maintain their dignity and vision of how they should be treated in the face of a reality that totally undermines both. In a cartoon for the 2/7/31 *NEW YORKER* an imperious man at a costume party thunders that matters have "gone a bit too far... Someone's purloined my Burberry!", oblivious to the fact that he can hardly command much respect considering that he is at present dressed as an enormous bunny rabbit. Another furious gentleman, in a 3/30/46 cartoon, dressed in a derby, shirt, underwear, socks, garters and nothing else, demands to know from a bored salesman, "Are you suggesting that I was *not* wearing a suit when I came in here?" In a 5/17/41 cartoon, an aristocrat in a tuxedo smiles proudly and defiantly at a police sergeant, having just announced, in the words of another policeman, that "He has money, position, many influential friends, and we can't do this to him." But the aristocrat is also unmistakably as drunk as can be, and the policemen *are* doing this to him. No one in these cartoons is so important that life cannot make him look ridiculous. A person may think his will can prevail against the unshakable laws of his world, but in these cartoons it never can. In a 9/21/40 cartoon, a submarine commander shouts at a bewildered and thoroughly drenched sailor standing atop the sub: "Maybe after this you'll realize that when I say I'm going to dive, I mean it. Now go below and dry yourself."

Indeed, it seems inevitable in these cartoons that a person who thinks he can get away with defying reality will receive his comeuppance. The cartoon on display for March 15, 1939, brings a paranoid fantasy to this regard to life: a guilty man turns to find his accuser's head protruding from the jaws of a mounted moose head. "So, Mr. Bowen!" the accuser proclaims. "At it again, are you?"

Other Arno characters have different problems in dealing with reality. Some seem unable to grasp the seriousness of situations and instead perceive them as innocuously pleasant, as in the case of the fireman who brings marshmallows to a conflagration (2/4/39). Others ignore facts they dislike or cannot comprehend, as in the case of a pompous older man who, having wandered past a number of pairs of embracing lovers in the park, comments that "conversation is a lost art" (4/15/34).

Arno points to people's failings but he does not do so viciously. In his cartoon for the February 24, 1940, *NEW YORKER*, we see an annoyed-looking man sitting in a room filled with guns, trophies and mounted animal heads. His butler says, "There's a burglar prowling about in the Blue Room, sir. Would you like a crack at him before I call the police?" The butler is smiling: he is amused by his master's' pretensions, just as the smiling policemen are by that intoxicated man in the tuxedo. But these are affectionate, good-natured smiles, denoting not only amusement but tolerance for the faults of fellow humans. Perhaps underlying the smiles is the characters'—and the cartoonist's—recognition that they are not so very different from the people who at that moment seem so absurd. Arno's comedy acknowledges people's inadequacies, but recognizes that is it these departures from perfection that make us human. ●

NMI

The only three letters you need to know for quality distribution

For dealer information, contact:

NEW MEDIA IRJAX, INC.
12345 Starkey
Largo, FL 33543
(800) 237-5991

KA-ZAR